MISUNDERSTOOD DRAGON OR UNDERESTIMATED PANDA: HOW CHINA REACTS TO EXTERNAL NATIONAL SECURITY CRISES

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This study uses the theory of strategic culture to analyze how China reacts to an external national security crisis. Following an overview of the theory, the author introduces a strategic culture framework. Three cases studies (Korean War, Vietnam War, and 1995 Taiwan crisis) serve as qualitative evidence for the framework. This study concludes that strategic culture is useful as a supplementary lens in understanding Chinese responses to a security crisis. The framework also provides a rough translation of Chinese strategic concepts into familiar US concepts. The framework can aid a US strategist by helping anticipate how Chinese strategic culture will lead Beijing to react during a security crisis. A sample application of the framework in a real-world scenario is included as an appendix.

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APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets masters-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

This study uses the theory of strategic culture to analyze how China reacts to an external national security crisis. Following an overview of the theory, the author introduces a strategic culture framework. Three cases studies (Korean War, Vietnam War, and 1995 Taiwan crisis) serve as qualitative evidence for the framework. This study concludes that strategic culture is useful as a supplementary lens in understanding Chinese responses to a security crisis. The framework also provides a rough translation of Chinese strategic concepts into familiar US concepts. The framework can aid a US strategist by helping anticipate how Chinese strategic culture will lead Beijing to react during a security crisis. A sample application of the framework in a real-world scenario is included as an appendix.

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Introduction

Tensions between states generally arise from a lack of transparency. At least this is the complaint of US military strategists as they attempt to understand the consequences of China's rise in economic and military power. A lack of transparency leads to "uncertainty and risks of miscalculation."[1] Therefore, part of the strategist's job is to "Know the enemy…" in an attempt to decrease uncertainty.[2] China is not an enemy, but instead a state with limited transparency. In light of China's opacity, how does a US strategist understand the complex Chinese culture? Scholars have produced valuable works on the subject but have failed to provide a practical model that serves the strategist's needs. Moreover, scholars interpret Chinese culture differently.

Chinese scholars tend to gravitate toward one of two polarized camps: *panda huggers* or *dragon slayers*. These camps divide along different views of Chinese strategic culture. Broadly speaking, strategic culture answers whether, why, and how states fight. This paper defines strategic culture as how decision makers view the role of war in state affairs, as well as how efficacious they perceive the use of force in resolving an external national security crisis.

The panda hugger assumes a Chinese culture averse to violence. Moreover, panda huggers believe that the United States should not fear China's rise to power in order to develop China into an internationally responsible country. The panda hugger views US interaction with China as an opportunity to bolster Sino-US relations. Finally, the panda hugger views war with China as highly unlikely.

On the other end of the dichotomy is the dragon slayer. This person believes the Chinese have a proclivity toward violence. The dragon slayer ascribes to a preventative approach that seeks to tame the wild dragon by maintaining a US power advantage in relation to China. The dragon slayer believes the US should direct its efforts toward protecting US interests when dealing with China, unlike the panda hugger who is more sensitive to actions that might elicit tensions. Additionally, the dragon slayer sees China

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[1] Paul Eckert, "Pentagon Criticizes China on Military Transparency," *Reuters*, 25 March 2009, http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSTRE52O5PX20090325 (accessed on 13 May 2009).
[2] Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 125.

as a looming threat to the US and believes war with China is more likely than the panda hugger realizes. Neither extreme satisfactorily explains the complex Chinese strategic culture.

This paper asserts that US strategists can better understand, and to some extent anticipate, how China reacts to an external national security crisis by translating Chinese propensities into a US paradigm using a framework grounded in the theory of strategic culture. Three case studies provide the qualitative evidence to assess the validity of the proposed strategic culture framework. If valid, the framework, or model, should: (1) explore the utility of strategic culture theory, (2) translate key Chinese paradigms to western paradigms, and (3) provide a practical framework to help the US strategist better understand how China might react to an external national security crisis. This chapter presents an overview of the three main parts of the paper: strategic culture framework, case studies, and a preview of the "Conclusions and Application" chapter.

Strategic Culture

Chapter 1 provides an overview of strategic culture theory. The theory is relatively young, and scholars continue to debate its utility. One expectation of the framework is to increase understanding of strategic culture theory's ability to explain or predict state behavior. The framework is applied here to three case studies: Korea, Vietnam, and the 1995 Taiwan crisis. Strategic culture theory suggests that patterns exist in state decision-making. The framework looks for discernable strategic cultural patterns among the three cases in an attempt to validate the theory.

The second expectation for the framework is to serve as a rough translation between Chinese and US paradigms. The model does this by juxtaposing US notions against Chinese strategic cultural preferences. The hope is that a US paradigm will adequately explain Chinese cultural phenomena. The translation will not be exact but will supplement a US strategist's cultural understanding of China.

The final expectation is that the framework provides a benefit to the US strategist by shedding light on how China reacts to a security crisis. This objective is tested by applying the Chinese cultural preferences found in the model against historical cases. If the framework adequately and consistently explains Chinese actions then, from an a

priori standpoint, the framework holds potential utility for anticipating responses in future Chinese crises.

Case Studies

The framework uses three historical case studies. The first case study encompasses the Korean War, focusing on the period from 1949-50. The framework is useful for explaining Chinese reactions in Korea. The chapter concludes that a perceived threat to territorial integrity invoked fear that caused China to intervene in Korea. The response to China's fear evolved into a hard power response. The traditional view holds that the October 1950 violation of the 38th Parallel by US troops led China to fear a US invasion. Indeed, China's fear of a potential US invasion on mainland China occurred before the violation of the 38th Parallel and even before the Inchon landing the previous month. The significance of the 38th Parallel is that it was China's line in the sand. The Chinese would respond short of hard power to avert the crisis as long as the US remained south of the 38th.

Chapter 3 covers the Vietnam War from 1961-69. This study adds a degree of depth to the analysis due to the similarities between the Chinese crises of Korea and Vietnam. The findings suggest that fear wrapped in a cloak of honor drove Chinese intervention in Vietnam. The patterns in China's reactions in Vietnam closely mimicked the responses in Korea, which suggests the utility of strategic culture as a concept.

Chapter 4 covers the final case study. Here, the Taiwan crisis of 1995 offers a context very different from the first two cases. The Taiwan crisis brings breadth to the analysis because it did not involve the heavy hand of Mao or the Soviet Union in decision-making. Additionally, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was more mature by this time, having been in power for almost 50 years. The evidence suggests that China used a coercion strategy regarding Taiwan, because it feared "losing" the island as part of its territory.

Framework Viability

Although the strategic culture framework shows potential utility for the US strategist, it is not a panacea for understanding Chinese strategic culture. It is, however, a useful lens to view the complex nature of Chinese strategic culture.

The ability of the model's performance to meet the first goal, investigating the utility of strategic culture theory, is encouraging. The model appears to be consistent across all cases in explaining the events of each crisis. Viewing these old cases through the fresh lens of strategic culture offers a different focus in several instances. One example is the conventional notion that China sends indirect, ambiguous signals during a crisis. Korea is an oft-cited example of this. Viewing the Korean crisis through the framework helps debunk this myth.

The second objective, to design a basic translation between key Chinese and US strategic culture concepts, appears useful as well. The idea is to take what many see as a mystical, incomprehensible culture and provide US notions that come close to representing Chinese cultural characteristic. The translation does not have to be complete to be effective; close enough may be good enough. A practical example appears between the Chinese and US concept of honor. The Chinese equivalent used in the framework is Confucian moralism. While the Chinese concept is not directly equivalent to the western concept, it does provide a useful means for a western strategist to envision the notion. The benefit is that the strategist is able to perform "educated" mirror-imaging that brings about closer understanding than might otherwise have been the case without the model.

The final objective is to provide a practical framework to help the US strategist better understand how China reacts to a national security crisis. The framework is useful because it provides an initial vantage point to view a complex circumstance by simplifying it into three basic elements. An important point here is that the framework is merely a starting point. It provides a means for the strategist to view the problem through the lens of strategic culture in an attempt to gain an insight that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The analysis suggests that a US strategist can reasonably understand Chinese strategic culture by drawing upon the framework containing corresponding US concepts. The value of the framework is that it allows "educated" mirror-imaging of China that at first seem incomprehensible. It is not a substitute for cultural understanding, but rather an aid. The application portion of the chapter offers a response to the question of whether China is a misunderstood dragon or an underestimated panda.

Chapter 1

Strategic Culture

> *Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity. When near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are near. …When he is united, divide him. Attack when he is unprepared; sally out when he does not expect you.*
>
> *--Sun Tzu*

> *The policy which you are suggesting is one of bandits and thieves, the only purpose of which is deception. I cannot allow my glory always to be diminished by Darius' absence, or by narrow terrain, or by tricks of night. I am resolved to attack openly and by daylight. I choose to regret my good fortune rather than be ashamed of my victory.*
>
> *--Alexander the Great*

The above epigraphs articulate disparate views between the western ways of war and the Chinese ways of war. Both views date back thousands of years, but are they still true? Chinese concepts such as *bing yi zha li* (war is based on deception), *chu-qi zhi-sheng* (win through unexpected moves), and *yi-rou ke-gang* (use the soft and gentle to overcome the hard and strong) stand in stark contrast to the avowed western ways of war.[1] Dating back to ancient Greece, the western ways rely on a heavy use of force-on-force fighting bounded by honor and fair play.[2] Do the above Chinese concepts simply represent a caricature of Chinese views about fighting? If so, what does the Chinese way of war look like, and how does one go about codifying it?

The purpose of this chapter is to build a framework that addresses questions regarding the Chinese view on the efficacy of force in a national crisis. To accomplish this daunting task, the chapter begins with an overview of strategic culture. It then

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[1] Other observations about the Chinese way of war include: *shang-bing fa-mou* (supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy), *qi-zheng xiang-sheng* (mutual reproduction of regular and extraordinary forces and tactics), *chu-qi zhi-sheng* (win through unexpected moves), *yin-di zhi-sheng* (gain victory by varying one's strategy and tactics according to the enemy's situation), *bi-shi ji-xu* (stay clear of the enemy's main force and strike at his weak point), *yi-yu wei-zhi* (to make the devious route the most direct), *hou-fa zhi-ren (*fight back and gain the upper hand only after the enemy has initiated fighting), *sheng-dong ji-xi* (make a feint to the east but attack in the west). David Lai, *Learning From the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China's Strategic Concept, Shi* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 4-5.

[2] David Lai, *Learning From the Stones: A Go Approach to Mastering China's Strategic Concept, Shi* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 5.

addresses the controversy surrounding what many consider an immature theory. The chapter concludes by presenting a strategic culture framework that serves as a lens throughout the thesis to answer the question, "How does China react to an external national security crisis?"

Strategic Culture Overview

In broad terms, strategic culture encompasses whether, why, and how states fight.[3] More specifically, strategic culture is *how decision makers view the role of war in state affairs, and how efficacious they perceive the use of force in resolving an external national security crisis*.[4] Strategic culture theory is an international relations theory with the goal of explaining or predicting state behavior just as neorealist theory attempts to do, but through different means. Strategic culture advocates argue that states have unique strategic preferences and that these preferences originate from historical experience.[5] The neorealist framework (rational actor model) asserts that states base their actions on the strategic situation and that qualities unique to a state, such as culture or governing structure, have no bearing on strategic decision-making. States, therefore, tend to reach the same conclusions given a similar context. The neorealist framework leads to value-maximizing efforts.[6] On the other hand, the strategic culture approach assumes that because of cultural differences decision makers from different cultures will tend to make different decisions given a similar context.[7] Likewise, strategic culture theorists postulate that a state will make comparable decisions, under similar circumstances.

Strategic culture is an immature theory. Nonetheless, from an a priori viewpoint it holds the potential to explain, and even *anticipate* state behavior. To be clear, strategic culture theory cannot definitively predict behavior, but it does hold the potential to draw rough patterns that may help anticipate behavior. Robert Jervis sums up the limitation on the predictive power of state behavior when explaining how one state misperceived the

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[3] Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 130.
[4] This definition is the author's own synthesis, but primarily derived from Andrew Scobell. Andrew Scobell, "China and Strategic Culture" (Monograph, Strategic Studies Institute, May 2002), 2.
[5] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," *International Security*, 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 34, http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2539119.pdf.
[6] Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (Boston, MA: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1999), 23-27.
[7] Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," 35.

actions of another state. Jervis points to a flawed perception as the result of one state assuming the other's actions were purposefully constructed. He accuses the overoptimistic state for reading too much into an opponent's actions. Instead of assuming careful and purposeful actions, he presents an alternate possibility that states might not always act in an omniscient manner. Jervis offers, "Like confusion, stupidity is rarely given its due."[8] Robert Bathurst presents further rationale as to the limitations on the predictive power of strategic culture theory. He argues that culture shrinks the purview of decision makers by forming a "walled space" that limits their ability to accurately interpret other cultures. This describes the phenomena known as mirror-imaging. Mirror-imaging occurs when an actor of a disparate culture interprets the actions of another through the lens of their own milieu.[9] Culture shapes who we are, how we think, and how we categorize events for understanding. It is the context behind our actions.[10] While strategic culture holds great potential, scholars remain divided as to its explanatory power.[11]

Strategic Culture Debate

Some scholars hold that strategic culture theory is useful in predicting or at least explaining behavior, while others argue culture and behavior are inseparable. Alastair Iain Johnston and Colin S. Gray represent each view respectively.

Gray argues that scholars like Johnston, seeking to distinguish culture from behavior, are making a serious mistake.[12] He avers, "Strategic culture provides context for understanding, rather than explanatory causality for behavior." [13] He further states that culture encompasses ideas and behavior to such a degree that decision makers cannot separate culture from everyday behavior—strategic behavior is cultural behavior.[14] However, like Johnston, he believes that a society can have more than one strategic

[8] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 323.
[9] Robert B. Bathurst, *Intelligence and the Mirror: On Creating an Enemy* (London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd, 1993), 3.
[10] Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back", *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 49.
[11] Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," 63.
[12] Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 130.
[13] Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context," 49.
[14] Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 129.

culture and that the culture can change over time. Gray also states that societies not only have multiple strategic cultures, they also contain sub-cultures such as a military culture.[15] In the end, Gray concedes that "Strategic culture is a useful notion provided one does not ask too much of it."[16] While many similarities exist between the two scholars, the disparate ideas over behavior mute any fruitful agreements.

Johnston states that his main difference with Gray is that Johnston believes behavior is a dependent variable. Johnston therefore, seeks to explain why decision makers behave the way they do.[17] He writes specifically on Chinese strategic culture using the S*even Military Classics* of China as bedrock for his framework and the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) as an empirical focus. He defines strategic culture as "…ranked grand strategic preferences derived from central paradigmatic assumptions about the nature of conflict and the enemy…."[18] The central paradigm he refers to is composed of assumptions that provide answers to the role of warfare in human affairs, the nature of the enemy and its threat to the state, and finally, how the state views the efficacy of force for solving problems.[19] He concludes that China has two strategic cultures: (1) the Confucian-Mencian paradigm and the (2) parabellum paradigm. These paradigms approximate the panda hugger and dragon slayer respectively.

The Confucian-Mencian paradigm assumes that with good government, conflict is avoidable. If unavoidable, conflict is reserved for defensive purposes only and must accompany a righteous cause based upon a moral-political order. The assumptions that underlie this paradigm cultivate grand strategic preferences, in order: (1) accommodationist strategies, (2) defensive strategies, and (3) offensive strategies. Most western and even Chinese scholars seem to espouse this paradigm.[20] The second paradigm Johnston finds in the S*even Military Classics* is the parabellum paradigm.

The parabellum paradigm assumes that conflict is the normal state of nature. Parabellum stems from a Chinese idiom that closely resembles the Roman adage: *si vis*

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[15] He states that the change is slow. That it is not even decade-by-decade. Gray, *Modern Strategy,* 131.
[16] Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context," 57.
[17] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Strategic Cultures Revisited: Reply to Colin Gray," *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (1999): 519, 521.
[18] Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), ix.
[19] Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture*, 149, 248.
[20] Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture*, 117-123, 135, 249.

pacem, para bellum ("if you want peace, prepare for war").[21] The paradigm promotes force as a highly effective means for settling conflict. The assumptions that underlie this paradigm foster grand strategic preferences, in order: (1) offensive strategies, (2) coercive strategies, and (3) accommodationist strategies. Johnston concludes that the parabellum paradigm is the dominant strategic culture resident in the *Seven Military Classics* and most applicable to Chinese strategic culture.[22] Johnston's paradigms reflect the two central Chinese strategic culture camps represented by scholars.[23] While useful in understanding Chinese strategic preferences, the paradigms do not account for a graduated approach that might encompass facets of several strategies. For this reason, a comprehensive framework that combines elements of both paradigms is useful to gain insight into how China reacts to an external national security crisis.

[21] Mark Burles and Abram N. Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force: Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2000), 79.
[22] Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture*, 61-93, 249.
[23] Some scholars that tend to approximate one of the two cultures suggested by Alastair Johnston include: David Lai, Andrew Scobell, Toshi Yoshihara, and Tiejun Zhang. Colin Gray has thus far not written on Chinese strategic culture in particular.

Strategic Culture Framework

To understand how China responds to a security crisis, Figure 1 introduces a *Crisis-Trigger-Response* framework. The *crisis* consists of an external, national security

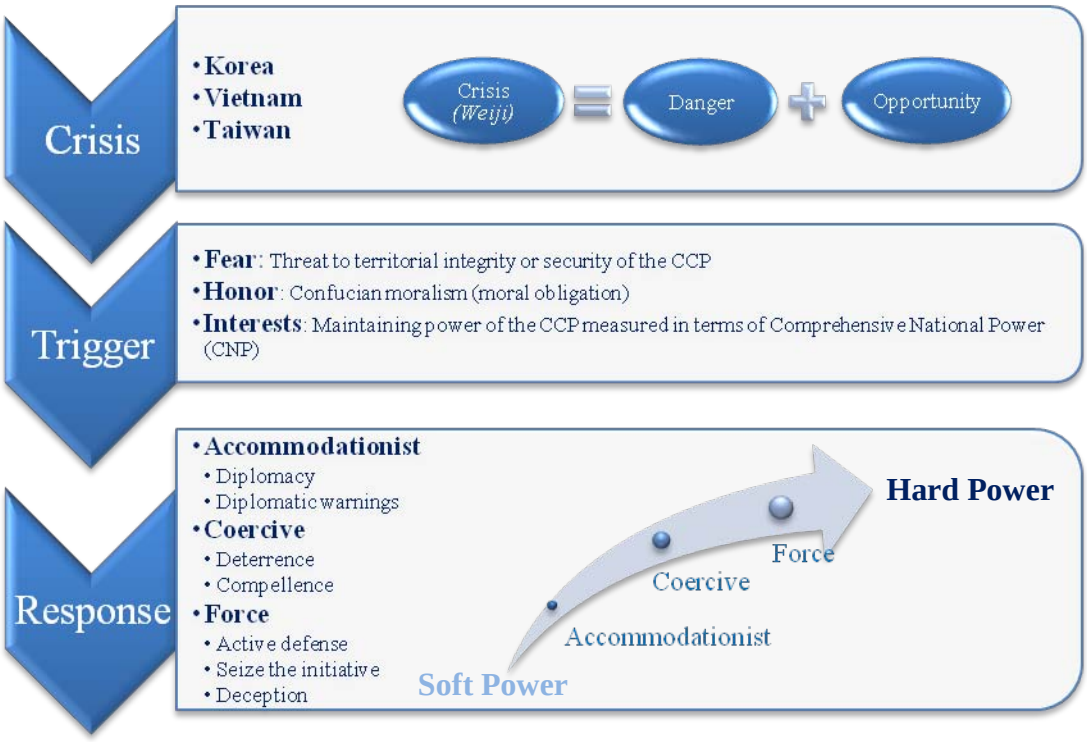

Figure 1
Crisis-Trigger-Response Framework
Source: Author's Original Work

predicament facing China, the *trigger* is the motive that invokes action, and the *response* is the type of action taken by Chinese decision makers. The model provides a translation of Chinese concepts using US paradigms. The translation is beneficial to the US strategist who may hold a limited understanding of Chinese culture. The US paradigms supplement limited understanding by providing a mental model that the strategist can more easily comprehend. This is not intended replace cultural understanding, but rather to supplement understanding. The model begins at the top and flows down, starting with the *crisis*. The Chinese word for crisis, *weiji*, is comprised of two characters that translate as danger and opportunity. Therefore, to the Chinese, a crisis is not necessarily

bad, unlike the negative connotation of a crisis found in US culture.[24] Three case studies provide the backbone for the analysis: China's involvement in the Korean War, Vietnam War, and the Taiwan crisis of 1995. These cases shape the study in several important ways. To begin, all three crises involve the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This is important because it controls for variation due to unique CCP political culture. Another important aspect of these cases is that they involve the US. Finally, they include two cases under Mao and one case after Mao's death. The purpose for including a post-Mao case is to balance Mao's overwhelming influence in the first two cases.[25] External threats are ubiquitous to national security concerns. States, however, only respond to those threats that trip a certain threshold of concern, a *trigger*.

The framework in Figure 1 borrows from Thucydides' observations that fear, honor, and interests are motives that draw states into conflict.[26] In the crisis-trigger-response model, these motives serve as taxonomy for the trigger portion of the framework. Definitions for each motive (trigger) are:

- **Fear:** Perceived threat to territorial integrity or security of the CCP
- **Honor:** The Chinese equivalent of Confucian moralism[27]
- **Interests:** Maintaining power of the CCP measured in terms of variables included in Comprehensive National Power (CNP)[28]

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[24] Burles and Shulsky, viii.

[25] The purpose of this thesis is to use strategic culture as a lens for analysis. Mao's individual influence, while important, is not parsed in detail in this paper. Part of the reason is that Mao himself was influenced and shaped to some degree by Chinese strategic culture.

[26] While recording the history of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides observed that fear drove Sparta toward war with Athens in order to counter the Athenian rise in power. He further stated that interests (or profit) drove Athens to seek to expand its empire and thus, wage war with Sparta. Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, ed. Robert B. Strassler (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996), 16.

[27] Confucian moralism is "the habit and practice of constant moralizing and a persistent emphasis on morality, characterized by Confucian norms of Virtue, Benevolence and Righteousness for judging the domestic and foreign policies…." In essence, the Chinese will judge the actions of others against the Confucian moralism standard. If the adversary is seen to be in the wrong, they will respond accordingly. Tiejun Zhang, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Traditional and Present Features," *Comparative Strategy* 21, no. 2 (2002), 75 http://ejournals.ebsco.com/direct.asp?AritcleID=MYCH7QZ15CT082DLP2U.

[28] The CCP's power is both internal and external to China. The CNP measures the CCP's ability to maintain power. The CNP is a means for the Chinese to determine their perceived ranking among world powers. The actual term CNP did not come into existence until the 1980s, but the concept of 'power' has deep ancient roots. Examples of variables that make up the CNP include: economic power, natural resources, military power, foreign policy, and international influences. Power of the CCP encases these variables. Zhang, 80,83.

The framework contains translations from the western terms (fear, honor, and interests) that are slightly different from the Chinese equivalents. For example, fear comprises a perceived threat to territorial integrity or to the security of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Westerners can readily understand the meaning of fear presented in the model. The more difficult motive to grasp is the subtle difference between the Chinese view and US view of honor. The framework defines honor as Confucian moralism. Simply put, it implies a moral obligation for China to act. The Chinese notion is different from the US notion that perceives honor as a personality trait that stems from reputation. The final motive is interests. This motive contains a slightly different bent from the US concept. The Chinese measure interests in terms of sustaining or increasing power of the CCP as calculated by Comprehensive National Power (CNP). CNP is an index that measures China's national power in relation to other countries. The model allows multiple motives to play in a crisis, but attempts to identify the predominate trigger that led to a response by China.

The *response spectrum* is a scale that illustrates the propensity of the Chinese to use force. At the low end (left) of the scale is soft power, which incorporates diplomacy. The left end of the scale implies a willingness to avoid conflict.[29] At the extreme right end of the scale is the hard power response, which infers a full use of offensive combat force. Figure 1 uses the response spectrum to meld the western model of Joseph Nye's "smart power concept," with the Chinese strategic culture paradigms presented by Johnston. "Smart power means learning better how to combine our [US] hard and soft power." Nye defines soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies."[30] However, in the strategic culture model soft power equates to more than attractiveness, it represents a willingness to avoid armed conflict. In this study, a portion of Nye's soft power concept approximates Johnston's accommodationist approach.[31] Both concepts imply a desire to avoid a use of force.

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[29] There is more to Nye's concept of soft power than force, however, it is an appropriate representation used in this framework to describe a propensity to use force.

[30] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2004), x, 32.

[31] This is admittedly not a direct correlation; however, the model attempts to translate China's accommodationist strategy into a US paradigm. Because accommodationist strategies do not rely on the

Hard power, represented by a use of combat forces, is in the upper right of the response spectrum in Figure 1. The soft and hard power spectrum can be divided into three main parts: accommodationist, coercion, and armed force.[32]

At the low end of the spectrum is the accommodationist response. This response stems from the Confucian-Mencian paradigm that assumes conflict is avoidable with smart government intervention. The Chinese accommodationist strategy used in the model represents China's willingness to avoid force if possible. For this reason, the model includes diplomatic warnings and diplomacy by China as western equivalent concepts. The accommodationist strategy used in the model should not be confused with the traditional definition of "accommodation," which implies "readiness to aid or please others; obligingness."[33] Instead, accommodationist implies a desire to avoid conflict. The second increment along the response spectrum is a coercive response.

The model's coercive responses can be divided between the western concepts of deterrence and compellence. Deterrence is the use of threats in order to maintain the status quo, e.g., using a threat to persuade a country to forego acquiring nuclear weapons. Compellence is the threat, or limited use, of force to change status quo, e.g., convincing a state to abandon nuclear weapons it already possess.[34] The final destination along the response spectrum is the actual use of armed force.

The significant use of force equates to the extreme hard-power end of the spectrum. The response portion of the framework draws upon the work of six Chinese strategic culture scholars. The amalgamation of ideas yields three main attributes of the Chinese use of force: (1) an active-defense, (2) Shi (seize the initiative), and (3) deception.[35] Figure 2 lists the scholars that espouse each particular attribute.

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use of force, it is appropriate to place it at the left end of the continuum. "Here weakness and softness implies concessions or deception directed at potential adversaries in order to dissipate their aggressive intentions....But this only addresses the preference for nonviolent, *he qin*-type approaches to security over the application of force." Johnston, *Cultural Realism,* 119-120.

[32] The three levels represent levels of force. The author does not claim to own the terms, but did choose the strategies for the model.

[33] *Dictionary.com Online*, s.v. "accommodation," http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/accommodation (accessed 13 May 2009).

[34] Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might* (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 6.

[35] The six scholars include: David Lai, Alastair Johnston, Francois Jullien, Andrew Scobell, Toshi Yoshihara, and Tiejun Zhang.

The first attribute, active-defense, is best understood in terms of "reaction," rather than action.[36] Active-defense is a strategy that seeks to stop a perceived invasion before

Figure 2
Use of Force Attributes by Scholar
Source: Author's Original Work

the aggressor crosses into Chinese territory.[37] The reaction *(ying)* decreases the risk of China making an offensive move that might worsen the situation since the use of force is already matured, or at least inevitable. The Chinese view the adversary as forcing China's hand. Because the adversary makes the inaugural move, China feels justified in its reaction.[38] This concept can represent several US concepts. One is preemption. Another is anticipatory defense. Finally, China's perceived justification approximates the US concept of the "moral high-ground." The second attribute is the Chinese concept of *Shi*.

Shi is the notion of the *potential* in any given situation. It is similar to the US concept of seizing the initiative.[39] Sun Tzu illustrates this in several ways. In one maxim he writes, "Thus, those skilled at making the enemy move do so by creating a situation to which he must conform…." [40] It relies on an accurate assessment of the situation and an analysis of how it can work to China's favor. Sun Tzu also illustrates this concept by the image of water flowing down a mountain that is able to move boulders. The potential energy behind the stream is able "to make things happen."[41] Although a complex

[36] Francois Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy: Between Western and Chinese Thinking*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 98.
[37] Zhang, 85.
[38] Jullien, 98.
[39] Lai, *Learning From the Stones*, 2.
[40] Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War*, 140.
[41] Jullien, 17.

concept, it is sufficient for the framework to consider *shi* as comparable to the US idea of seizing the initiative.

The final attribute of the Chinese use of force is deception. Deception is "consistent, coordinated strategies to disguise military innovation and/or to mislead or to hide from the enemy one's own intentions…." It includes propaganda, surprise, and any actions that seek to shape the enemy's perceptions, motives, and emotions. Simply put, it seeks to induce misinformation by manipulation.[42] These three attributes of the Chinese use of force complete the strategic culture model. The intent of the *crisis-trigger-response* framework is to determine if a predominant Chinese strategic culture emerges from the case studies.

Conclusion

Strategic culture theory serves as the backbone of the framework. The definition of strategic culture is *how decision makers view the role of war in state affairs, and how efficacious they perceive the use of force in resolving external national security crises.* The chapter began with an overview of strategic culture theory. It stated that strategic culture could not definitively predict behavior, but that it may hold the potential to approximate behavior. The next section covered the debate between Gray and Johnston over the predictive power of the theory. The final section presented the strategic culture framework that will serve as an outline in the paper to answer the question, "How does China react to an external national security crisis?" If the model adequately explains the case studies, it may provide the strategist with a useful tool to help increase understanding of Chinese behavior and responses. Additionally, the model offers a translation between US and Chinese paradigms. The benefit of the translation is that it sheds light upon the mystical Chinese culture that is seemingly as different in meaning as the distance in miles between the two countries (US and China).

[42] Toshi Yoshihara, *Chinese Strategic Culture and Military Innovation: From the Nuclear to the Information Age* (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest Information and Learning Company, 2004), UMI Microfilm 3133699, 396. See also chapter 9 from Julien, *A Treatise on Efficacy*, 137-152.

Chapter 2

Case Study One: Korea

This chapter is the first of three case studies that applies the strategic culture framework to a Chinese crisis. The case focuses on events from 1949 - 1950. China's Korean crisis is the quintessential study for gleaning insight into China's strategic culture for several reasons. To begin, the newly formed Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was less than a year old when it faced the looming Korean intervention decision.[1] Because of the government's immaturity, many of the normal bureaucratic organizational behaviors had not yet developed, leaving decision makers to act out of instinct (strategic culture) rather than bureaucratic behavior.[2] Additionally, the Korean crisis crossed all aspects of the strategic culture model. It was the first major external crisis the CCP faced, the crisis showed both danger and opportunity, it touched all three triggers (fear, honor, interests), and it saw China maneuver along the response spectrum between soft and hard power responses.[3] The magnitude of the hard power response is the most interesting part of this case. Three million Chinese participated in the Korean War and sustained over one million casualties. While the People's Republic of China (PRC) did not formally declare war on another country, the Korean War was the largest foreign war in Chinese history.[4] A response of this magnitude raises important questions concerning strategic culture: what crisis did the CCP perceive? What drove the CCP to action? How did the CCP respond?

This chapter asserts that the Chinese decision to intervene in Korea was driven by fear that developed from a perceived threat to territorial integrity, which evolved into a hard-power response. The *crisis-trigger-response* model introduced in Chapter 1, Figure 1, structures the argument. The first section of this chapter discusses the events that led

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[1] The CCP was actually approximately 35 years old in 1950, however, the party had only been in power as the ruling government of China for one year.

[2] Strategic culture shapes each individual and ones instinctive reactions. Bureaucracies can also influence strategic decision-making through organizational culture. By looking at a case where the organizational culture was not fully developed, it controls for another variable (organizational behavior) and keeps the findings slightly "purer."

[3] See Chapter 1for definitions of fear, honor, and interests.

[4] Xiaobing Li, Allan R. Millett, and Bin Yu, ed. and trans., *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 5-6.

up to the crisis. In keeping with the connotation of the Chinese term *weiji*, which approximately translates to "crisis," the section discusses the dangers and opportunities perceived by China. The next section analyzes the triggers that provoked Chinese action. The chapter wraps up by fleshing out the Chinese response. The response gradually evolved from a soft to a hard power response. The first section begins by delineating between the *danger* and *opportunity* faced by the CCP.

Crisis over Korea

At the outset of the crisis, the fledging Chinese government was still tying up loose ends from its recent victory in the Chinese Civil War. Many dangers faced the government as it sought to stabilize the shattered economy, heal wounds within the country, and plan an invasion to recover its lost territory of Tibet and Taiwan. Once the United States, under the guise of the United Nations (UN), entered the Korean peninsula, danger rang within China, but at the same time opportunity knocked.

Mao Zedong was the dominant decision maker in China during the Korean crisis.[5] For this reason, it is essential to parse his personality. He was a "challenge-oriented" individual and accordingly saw the crisis as both a challenge and an opportunity.[6] While Mao's challenge-oriented nature may be a character trait, it likely stems from the Chinese interpretation of *weiji* (crisis). Although Mao heavily influenced decisions, he was also a product of Chinese strategic culture. The opportunity Mao perceived from the crisis encompassed domestic and international prospects. If China was successful in meeting the US imperialists, the CCP would gain favor internally as well as internationally. This would signal a new and powerful China led by the CCP.[7] Weighing the opportunities meant also considering the dangers, both internal and external.

The internal dangers stemmed from rising inflation brought about by the civil war and the need to unify the country under the new government. Mao mentioned this during a meeting with Joseph Stalin in December 1949: "China needs a period of 3-5 years of peace, which would be used to bring the economy back to prewar levels and to stabilize

[5] Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 79.
[6] Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), 218-19.
[7] Jian, 219.

the country in general."[8] Going to war would be costly to the economy and possibly disastrous for the CCP. The decision did not come without dissent. Nie Rongzhen was the acting chief of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Staff and vice chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission. He recounted in his memoirs that several leading party members dissented. They argued that the new republic had an urgent need to recover from the civil war and address the economic and peace issues before considering a war in Korea.[9] Moreover, the CCP was planning an invasion of Taiwan to reunite the islands with mainland China.

The US entry onto the Korean peninsula significantly raised China's perception of danger. Not only did the US presence threaten to halt the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) offensive into South Korea, but US presence also raised the question of where the US would stop during what the CCP believed was as an inevitable counteroffensive. Additionally, the US Seventh Fleet neutralized the Taiwan Straits in June 1950, forcing the CCP to cancel its planned attack on Chiang Kai-shek and Taiwan.[10] Finally, in October 1950, danger reached crescendo as the UN moved north of the Thirty-eighth Parallel while marching toward the Yalu River. The PRC considered the threat posed to the strategically and economically important Chinese region of Manchuria. The Chinese, according to Rongzhen, perceived this as an audacious act by the Americans, "…the American invading forces outrageously crossed the Thirty-eighth Parallel…Thus, the American imperialists forced a war on the Chinese people."[11]

Is Rongzhen's accounting accurate? Was the single act that brought China into the Korean War the US crossing north of the Thirty-eighth Parallel? Certainly, that was the conventional wisdom underlying the Chinese decision to intervene in Korea, but a closer look through the strategic culture lens sheds additional light on the question.[12]

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[8] This is translated from transcripts of the Russian Presidential Archives. It is a recorded conversation between Stalin and Mao in Moscow, 16 December 1949. "Cold War International History Project Bulletin: The Cold War in Asia," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995 / 1996), 5.
[9] Li, Millett, and Yu 38, 41.
[10] Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company / RAND Corporation, 1960), v.
[11] Li, Millett, and Yu, 39-40.
[12] Jian, 3. Also see Richard Whelan, *Drawing the Line: The Korean War, 1950 – 1953* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company, 1990), 237-240.

The Trigger That Provoked Action

While all three triggers (fear, honor, and interest) played in the Korean intervention decision by the Chinese, fear was the primary one.[13] However, it is instructive to discuss each trigger and how it interacted in the PRC's complicated calculus. It is helpful to go back before the Korean crisis to 1949 and ascertain the CCPs motives as a new government. The impetus behind pre-Korean crisis CCP actions was primarily interests. Specifically, the CCP agenda included gaining domestic and international recognition as a legitimate government. Mao pursued this agenda by seeking an alliance with the Soviet Union. His goal was to gain assistance from Stalin for the resources needed to attack Taiwan.[14] In particular, in a December 1949 meeting, Mao asked Stalin for money, air transportation routes, and assistance in creating a naval force to help with preparations for a Taiwan assault.[15] In a 22 December meeting with Stalin, Mao mentions that, "…the main question is economic cooperation-the reconstruction and development of the Manchurian economy."[16] It is evident that Mao was seeking economic and military assistance from the Soviets in order to further the interests of the CCP by strengthening its power. This is consistent with the model's definition of interests. This raises the question that if Mao and the new CCP leadership were still struggling to rebuild after the civil war, what motive could be powerful enough to send them into a risky venture like the Korean War? Did the opportunity of the crisis entice the CCP to further its interests by engaging the most powerful nation in the world at that time? Did honor (Confucian moralism) drive the Chinese to Korea or did fear force them to act?

The traditional viewpoint was that the Chinese trigger-point in the Korean War for intervention occurred when the US crossed the Thirty-eighth Parallel and advanced

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[13] See Chapter 1 for definitions of fear, honor, and interests.
[14] Richard C. Thornton, *Odd Man Out: Truman, Stalin, Mao, and the Origins of the Korean War* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2000), 1.
[15] This is translated from transcripts of the Russian Presidential Archives. It is a recorded conversation between Stalin and Mao in Moscow, 16 December 1949. "Cold War International History Project Bulletin: The Cold War in Asia," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995 / 1996), 5-6.
[16] This is translated from transcripts of the Russian Presidential Archives. It is a recorded conversation between Stalin and Mao in Moscow, 22 December 1949. "Cold War International History Project Bulletin: The Cold War in Asia," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995 / 1996), 9.

toward the Yalu River in October 1950.[17] However, new research reveals that the decision occurred as early as August 1950, even before MacArthur's famous Inchon landing.[18] This is noteworthy because it provides an alternative to conventional wisdom that a US strategist might not otherwise understand. It is not surprising that a country would fear a superpower located within miles of its border. It is, however, intriguing to note that China's comfort zone appears much smaller than the US'. The model illuminates this inherent paranoia in Chinese culture. Indeed, honor and interests did play into the decision, but only in a subordinate role to the real motive: fear.

Of the three motives, honor appears to be the least significant in China's decision to intervene in Korea. The Chinese notion of honor used in this framework is Confucian moralism. In the case of Korea, it entailed a moral obligation to protect the righteous ideology of communism. Chinese Prime Minister, Zhou Enlai, made the following public announcement on 30 September 1950: "The Chinese people can neither allow the imperialists willfully to invade our neighbors, nor can we ignore such provocations."[19] Chen Jian, in his book, *China's Road to the Korean War*, mentions that a fundamental rationale that dominated Chinese decision-making was its perceived obligation to an Asian-wide revolution.[20] Jian's statement points to a sense of Chinese honor in Korea, but the evidence does not support honor as a primary motive.

The interests considered by the CCP carried over from its original motives before the crisis: maintain the power of the CCP.[21] On the domestic front, Mao continued to fuel the momentum of the revolution by rallying the people against external threats in order to build solidarity.[22] Another domestic motive was the CCP's need to unite the Chinese people for Mao's vision of a transformed China. On the international front, the CCP saw the crisis as an opportunity to highlight China's great power and the righteousness of its revolution.[23] This appears in Peng Dehuai's autobiography. As the Chinese People's Volunteer Force (CPVF) commander, Peng was the top Chinese military leader in Korea. He communicated with Mao daily, interacted with Kim Il Sung

[1717] See evidence and citations on page 19.
[18] Jian, 3.
[19] Li, Millett, and Yu, 41.
[20] Jian, 2, 214.
[21] Jian, 5.
[22] Jian, 213.
[23] Jian, 218.

of Korea as well as Stalin. He noted, "How could [we] show our power and strength if we did not send our forces to aid and save Korea?"[24] Indeed, Allen S. Whiting, a respected Chinese scholar, noted that, "It is difficult to think of any single course of action that could have so enhanced the stature of the new regime as did intervention in Korea."[25] Undoubtedly, interests played a major role in the CCP's decision to intervene; however, it was not sufficient by itself to warrant the great risk to the struggling new government.

Fear was the primary reason behind Mao's decision to intervene. The peninsula had been a route for invasion of China by the Japanese between 1868 and WWII.[26] This was fresh in the minds of CCP leadership, including Mao's leading general, Peng, who commented: "In the past when the Japanese invaded China they used Korea as a springboard….We cannot overlook this lesson of history. *We must fight the enemy now, we cannot hesitate*."[27] Rongzhen recorded that by August 1950, Mao and the Central Committee believed that the US would not stand for the success of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) reaching the Naktong River in South Korea during the NKPA counteroffensive. They assumed the US would launch a counteroffensive. For this reason, Rongzhen ordered the forces on August 5 to "Complete all necessary preparations within this month. Be ready for the order of new movement and engagement."[28] Peng further backed up the perceived fear of invasion when he penned, "The U.S. could find a pretext at any time to launch a war of aggression against China."[29] Mao also sowed fear amongst the Chinese people by authoring the slogan: "Resist America and aid Korea; defend our nation and guard our homeland."[30] This slogan primarily rested upon the notion of fear of invasion, with the added gusto of a moral undertone. Another cultural reason for the Chinese to fear national survival was due to its fall from power as the

[24] Li, Millett, and Yu, 30,32.
[25] Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 166.
[26] Li, Millett, and Yu, 11.
[27] Emphasis added. Scobell, 84.
[28] Li, Millett, and Yu, 40.
[29] Peng Dehuai, *Memoirs of a Chinese Marshal: The Autobiographical Notes of Peng Dehuai (1898-1974)*, ed. and trans. Sara Grimes and Zheng Longpu (Beijing, China: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 473.
[30] Li, Millett, and Yu, 42.

"Central Kingdom" in 1912. CCP leadership witnessed the change in Chinese regional dominance and believed China's very survival was at stake.[31]

Andrew Scobell points out several reasons why China should not have intervened, but he states that the fact that China did intervene "implies that the country's strategic culture had a considerable impact on the decision."[32] Cultural instinct dominated decision-making. The CCP viewed the US as an external threat because of the fear for national and political survival of the PRC. The perceived fear stemmed from cultural influences. However, an escalating confrontation with the US that began in 1949 reached full height when MacArthur crossed the Thirty-eighth Parallel in 1950. [33] While temptation existed for the CCP to capitalize on its interests by seizing the opportunities presented from the crisis, the danger side of the crisis equation ultimately drove the action. Indeed, the conventional wisdom that claimed the US passage into North Korea triggered Chinese intervention was wrong. The evidence shows that the decision to intervene transpired as early as August 1950, and then it was simply a matter of how and when China would respond.

China's Response in Korea

China employed all three types of action along the response spectrum. China began at the soft power end of the response continuum as it tested its political acumen in the international arena. After numerous attempts to work through the UN, it moved to coercive measures. It was only after other efforts failed that it turned to a hard power response by sending combat troops into Korea. The analysis in this section follows the graduated approach that China took in responding to the Korean crisis: accommodationist strategy, coercive strategy, and finally the use combat force.[34]

The first response by the Chinese was an accommodationist strategy. This primarily involved diplomatic efforts to avert the crisis. Prior to 17 August 1950, the US rhetoric regarding its intentions in Korea was ambiguous, which relieved some of the pressure on Mao. However, the US ambassador to the UN, Warren Austin, increased anxiety within China when he declared before the UN Security Council that the US

[31] Jian, 214.
[32] Scobell, 92.
[33] Jian, 213, 217.
[34] As a reminder accommodationist is used in this model to imply a propensity to avoid the use of force.

objective was a "free, unified, and independent" Korea. Austin's statement caused the CCP to pursue diplomatic initiatives through the UN; however, the Soviets and the Americans thwarted the Chinese efforts. Failed UN attempts forced Mao to prepare for intervention while continuing diplomatic efforts.[35]

The first official diplomatic move by China came from Prime Minister Zhou Enlai on 20 August 1950. He sent a telegram to the UN to indicate China's "concern" regarding the "solution of the Korean question." He stressed that the crisis "must and can be settled peacefully." The Chinese received no response from the US. The next effort by Zhou came on 24 August in another cable to the UN. This time, he protested the US involvement in Taiwan. He asserted that Beijing was "determined to liberate from the tentacles of the United States aggressors Taiwan and all other territories belonging to China."[36] The third major move by Zhou came on 30 September in a public statement to the US that China would not allow the US to come up to its border.[37] The next day, after Republic of Korea (ROK) forces crossed the Thirty-eighth Parallel, Zhou asked Indian ambassador K. M. Panikkar to pass to the Americans: "If the American army crossed the Thirty-Eighth Parallel, the premier said, China would send its forces there to support Korea."[38] Although the Chinese messages appear indirect, and therefore somewhat ambiguous, one must be careful of accepting the myth that China sends indirect, ambiguous signals in its diplomatic efforts.[39] This legend likely came about because at the time of crisis the CCP was a new government without a US embassy, and therefore, no direct line to Washington. Nonetheless, Beijing leadership went out of its way to send a clear message, one that the US chose to ignore.

Communication limitations prevented direct links between the new Chinese government and the US during the Korean crisis. These limitations occurred despite President Truman's efforts to form diplomatic relations by announcing twice in January 1950 that the US would discontinue military support to Chiang Kai-shek.[40] The failed

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[35] Thornton, 266-7.
[36] Thornton, 270-1.
[37] Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, vi.
[38] Li, Millett, and Yu, 41.
[39] Keith mentions that "The Communist tendency to 'strategically despise the enemy' served to confirm American analysis in its Cold War assumptions." Ronald C. Keith, *The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 47.
[40] Thornton, 3.

attempts left neither an ambassador nor any other direct link to the US. The Chinese had no alternative but to communicate through UN and third party channels like India. Strategic culture relates to communications through the perceptions of the communications and signals. This was particularly true between the communist and democratic cultures of China and the US. Beijing's misperception of Washington's intentions, only fueled by the lack of direct communication, exaggerated the threat of the US and led to miscalculations in China's attempts to deter the US.[41] Nonetheless, deterrence played a significant role in China's response to the Korean crisis.

The Chinese used coercion in the forms of deterrence and compellence to deal with the Korean crisis in much the same way the US might handle a similar situation. Deterrence began in August after Ambassador Austin's remarks at the UN. It was at this time that China began taking military steps to backup its threats to prevent the US from intervening in Korea.[42] China began mobilizing its strategic reserve forces in concert with stern warnings from Premier Zhou.[43] Chinese armies moved into Manchuria in the fall of 1950 to signal Beijing's resolve to Washington.[44] Deterrence quickly turned to compellence on 15 September 1950 during the US landing at Inchon.[45] Once the US invaded Korea, the Chinese objective changed from preventing US intervention, to two separate objectives: removing the US from the peninsula and preventing an escalation beyond limited war. The Chinese managed to mitigate escalation by not flying south of the Thirty-eighth Parallel. The US, equally concerned about minimizing the risk of escalation, reciprocated by not bombing in Manchuria.[46] Meanwhile, the Chinese sought to evict the imperialist Americans from the Korean peninsula by introducing troops into Korea. The small-scale skirmishes quickly moved to full-scale force once the US crossed north into the DPRK. China's willingness to use force increased to the extreme hard-power end of the response spectrum.

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[41] Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, 168-9.
[42] Thornton, 267.
[43] Li, Millett, and Yu, 40.
[44] Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu*, vi.
[45] Crane does not discuss coercion here, simply the timeline of events in Korea. Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea: 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 1.
[46] Xiaoming Zhang, *Red Wings Over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 211.

China's use of force in Korea included all attributes presented in the strategic culture model: (1) active-defense, (2) *Shi*, and (3) deception. The notion of an active-defense strategy is to stop an invasion before the aggressor crosses onto mainland China.[47] In reference to Korea, Peng explained the active-defense strategy as one that allowed an offensive posture with a defensive backdrop.[48] This illustrates the Chinese People's Volunteer Force (CPVF) strategy in Korea and keeps with the proposal of an active-defense strategic culture in China.[49] The first campaign for the CPVF demonstrated one example of how the Chinese sought the second attribute of force, *shi* (seize the initiative), to gain an advantage.

From 21 – 25 October 1950, the CPVF instilled a strategic level psychological-political shock to the US.[50] US troops unexpectedly met Chinese forces south of the Yalu River, thereby forcing the US to retreat. Peng recorded the first campaign as a Chinese victory.[51] The second campaign also ended with a victory. Peng waited until the perfect moment when shi was at its highest before he attacked the Americans. In reference to seizing the initiative, Whiting writes, "Over time this evolves into a strategic culture of how to pursue political objectives through military means."[52] The timing of these attacks fits the intended concept that served as a psychological-political shock because the US was not expecting to meet Chinese troops. It was also during the second campaign that Peng began to use the third attribute of force, deception.

Peng writes on deception in the second campaign, "We employed the tactic of purposely showing ourselves to be weak, increasing the arrogance of the enemy, letting him run amuck, and luring him deep into our areas." Part of MacArthur's impatience that Peng exploited was his desire to reach the Yalu River before it froze.[53] Peng further took note of MacArthur's "home before Christmas" push.[54] The efforts were successful. The

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[47] Tiejun Zhang, "Chinese Strategic Culture: Traditional and Present Features," *Comparative Strategy* 21, no. 2 (2002): 85 http://ejournals.ebsco.com/direct.asp?AritcleID=MYCH7QZ15CT082DLP2U.
[48] Scobell, 92-3.
[49] Scobell, 28.
[50] Mark Burles and Abram N. Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force: Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2000), 10.
[51] Dehuai, 474-5.
[52] Allen S. Whiting, "China's Use of Force, 1950-96, and Taiwan," *International Security* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2003), 105.
[53] Burles and Shulsky, 5.
[54] Dehuai, 476.

campaign paved the way for China to resist the US and ended with the DPRK recovering its lost ground. [55] Peng's use of deception and shi can be traced back to Sun Tzu's writings. Sun Tzu notes the following maxims:[56]

- All warfare is based on deception
- Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity.
- Pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance.
- Attack where he is unprepared; sally out when he does not expect you.

Peng could not help but be influenced by the Chinese strategic culture, which dates back as far as Sun Tzu's ancient writings.[57] These three attributes combine to form a strategic culture contained in China's use force. The Korea case suggests that China demonstrated a propensity toward a graduated response that began with soft power and incrementally escalated to hard power.

Conclusion

The Korean crisis for China is a great first round test case to exercise the utility of the strategic culture framework. The model helped to glean insight into the Chinese decision to intervene in Korea. Although one case is insufficient to validate the model, the evidence did suggest that a perceived territorial integrity crisis drove China, triggered primarily by fear, and resulted in a hard power response. The first section discussed the events that led up to the Korean crisis for China. In this case, the crisis *(weiji)* presented both danger and opportunity to China. The next section analyzed the triggers and concluded that for China, fear was the primary driver, followed by a healthy amount of honor and only a small dose of interests. The perceived fear presented itself because of an inevitable UN intervention in South Korea and the potential for US ground forces to march north of the 38th Parallel. The chapter ends by explaining Beijing's response to the crisis. China maneuvered along the response spectrum spanning the entire spectrum from a soft to a hard power reply.

[55] Dehuai, 476-7.
[56] Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art*, 96, 97, 100.
[57] Burles Shulsky, 8.

Chapter 3

Case Study Two: Vietnam, 1961-69

This chapter applies the strategic culture framework to China's involvement in the Vietnam War. The Vietnam case study does not cover the French conflict in Indochina from 1945 through 1954. This chapter provides the context to consider "how does China react to an external national security crisis?" The period covers 1961 – 1969, when both the US and China were deeply involved in Vietnam. This case adds depth to the analysis because of Mao's consistent influence between the Korea and Vietnam cases.

This chapter asserts that *fear*, wrapped in a cloak of *honor*, drove the Chinese to intervene in Vietnam. The fear stemmed from a perceived threat of a US invasion into China. However, the Chinese portrayed its actions as support to its communist comrades, disguising its fear as honor. The Chinese reaction vacillated across the response spectrum, but fell short of a full hard-power response. The first section discusses the events that led up to the perceived crisis. The next section analyzes the triggers that spurred China into action. The chapter concludes with China's response.

Crisis in Vietnam

Vietnam did not turn into a crisis for China until 1964, after US signals showed a potential for significant support to South Vietnam. Similar to the Korean crisis, China found danger and opportunity in the crisis. The danger transpired in an external and internal form.

The internal danger stemmed from China's economy in the late 1950s. In 1958, Mao instituted the Great Leap Forward, which promised to bring the Chinese economy to parity with the US by 1988. Instead, the movement led to mass starvation. The Central Communist Party (CCP) abandoned the effort in 1960. [1] This forced Beijing to balance domestic issues against support for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).[2]

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[1] History Learning Site, "The Great Leap Forward," http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/great_leap_forward.htm (accessed 7 Mar 2009).

[2] Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-69," *The China Quarterly* No. 142 (Jun 1995): 358, http://www.jstor.org/stable/655420.

Four events brought rise to the external danger presented in the Vietnam crisis. The first external signal of danger to China came in the spring of 1961. John F. Kennedy increased the US footprint in Vietnam by sending 100 Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) advisors to Vietnam along with 400 Special Forces troops. A second and similar signal proved a major turning point in 1962 as the US established the Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV) to replace the MAAG.[3] After the MACV stood-up, China saw the situation as becoming serious in the South and began to envision the strong possibility of a US invasion into North Vietnam.[4] By the spring of 1962, Chinese leadership began to debate between the potential of a world war if China engaged militarily with the US, or of peaceful coexistence if China acquiesced to the US. On 27 February 1962 Wang Jiaxiang, Director of the CCP Foreign Liaison Department, sent a letter that criticized leadership for overstating the danger imposed by a conflict with the US while ignoring the possibility of peaceful coexistence with imperialism. Wang requested restraint in Vietnam and suggested China focus on its own internal economic problems.[5] Mao did not approve.

August 1964 ushered in the third external danger to China. The Gulf of Tonkin incident pushed Beijing into crisis mode because it raised the potential for a war with the US. The misjudgment by the US during the Korean crisis was fresh in the minds of Chinese leadership. The Tonkin incident, however, convinced the Chinese that it needed to deploy military forces in the event of a US expansion of the war into North Vietnam. The Chinese leadership concluded that the retaliatory bombings after the incident did not signal an immediate war in North Vietnam but they did acknowledge that the crisis had matured. In response, the Chinese strengthened its air power in Guangxi and Yunnan.[6]

The fourth significant danger signal confirmed Beijing's fears in early 1965. During March 1965, the US sent air power into North Vietnam to target military installations north of the 17 Parallel. Furthermore, on 8 March, US Marines landed at Da Nang with two armor battalions; both of these events were indicators of increased US

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[3] "Cold War International History Project Bulletin: The Cold War in Asia," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995 / 1996), 234.
[4] Xiaoming Zhang, "The Vietnam War, 1964-1969: A Chinese Perspective," *The Journal of Military History* 60, no. 4 (October 1996): 746.
[5] Cold War International History, 234.
[6] Zhang, 739.

resolve in South Vietnam.[7] Considering these four events, Chinese leadership believed it was on the verge of another Korean crisis. However, in spite of the dangers involved in the newly developed Vietnam crisis, China still found opportunity.

The crisis in Vietnam opened the opportunity for China to present a new image to the world. China saw the crisis before 1962 as an opportunity to establish a new identity as a country of peaceful co-existence. For this reason, Beijing was ambivalent to North Vietnamese efforts to liberate the south by force until 1962.[8] Wang Jiaxiang's (Director of the CCP Foreign Liaison Department) efforts represented this view. He proposed to restore the economy in order to bide time until China was in a more appropriate position to risk escalation with the US. He called for a policy of peace and conciliation.[9] Although Mao ultimately rejected these ideas, it was nonetheless an opportunity recognized by several high leaders in the CCP. All of these conditions added pressure that eventually led to the trigger that brought about Chinese action.

The Trigger that Provoked Action

A popular view holds that China's motive in Vietnam was honor, the spread of communist ideology; however, this was not the primary motive.[10] The primary trigger behind China's intervention in Vietnam in response to the US was fear born out of a threat to its security. Fear showcased itself in two forms: concern for the *spread of imperialism* along China's borders, and an actual *invasion* of China by the US.[11] Several questions surface when asserting that fear, not honor, was the primary trigger behind China's intervention. How does one explain China's support of the DRV when France was in Indochina? If it was fear of the US and not support of fellow comrades, then why did China leave in 1969, before the US pulled out?

French presence in the 1950s and US presence prior to 1964 in Indochina did not equate to a crisis for the Chinese because its presence did not reach a threshold to invoke

[7] Cold War International History, 236.
[8] Jian, 357.
[9] Cold War International History, 234-5.
[10] Zhang states "Thus, Chinese leaders believed it was their duty to assist Ho and his party in order to promote an Asia-wide or even world-wide revolution." However, it is important to note that Zhang does not espouse honor as the primary motive, but instead one of many motives in the complicated decision-making behavior of China. Zhang, 735.
[11] See Chapter 1 for definitions of fear, honor, and interests.

action. While the Chinese did support the DRV during this time with the motive of supporting comrades (honor), it did not operate in a crisis framework until dealing with the US in the mid-1960s. In other words, the earlier French and American activity did not reach a trigger threshold requiring a response. Instead, Chinese support to the DRV primarily entailed financial and material support with a small footprint of advisors to help wage guerilla warfare in South Vietnam. It was not until the US escalated its involvement in Vietnam in 1964, above China's threshold, that China found itself in a crisis.

Admittedly, the second question, why China pulled out in 1969 when the US was still active in Vietnam, is complicated. China pulled out of Vietnam in 1969 because it fell out with the DRV. However, if fear were China's primary motive, then why did the Chinese not stay? The reason China felt comfortable leaving was that the crisis of US involvement in Vietnam dissolved. This was due to clear signals by the US that it would not escalate the war by sending ground forces north of the 17th Parallel, the trip wire for the Chinese. Additionally, US policies in Vietnam underwent significant changes under the Nixon administration beginning in 1969. Specifically, Vietnamization signaled de-escalation in Vietnam as President Richard Nixon sought to withdraw US troops.[12] Indeed, fear primarily drove China's response to the US in Vietnam out of a perceived threat to national security.

Two fears stem from the threat to China's external security: concern for a *spread of imperialism* along China's borders, and an actual *invasion* of China by the US. Mao was concerned with the spread of imperialism. He equated security at home with like-minded neighboring countries. In the case of Vietnam, it was in Mao's best interest to prevent American imperialist success in Vietnam.[13] Mao and other Chinese leaders were concerned about a US strategy to encircle China by spreading capitalism in countries such as Vietnam. For this reason, the Chinese saw Vietnam as an opportunity to build revolutionary solidarity with the Vietnamese communists in order to battle the spread of

[12] John M. Rincon, Military History Online, "The Effects of Vietnamization on the Republic of Vietnam's Armed Forces, 1969-1972," http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/vietnam/vietnamization/# (accessed 11 Mar 2009).
[13] Qiang Zhai, *China & the Vietnam Wars, 1950 -1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 4.

western capitalism.[14] The Chinese recognized in 1961 that the US might be exhibiting imperialistic tendencies. In the spring, John F. Kennedy demonstrated an increased US involvement in Vietnam when he approved 100 additional MAAG advisors and 400 Special Forces troops.[15] The fear peaked by 1964. On 17 and 20 August, Mao made speeches that warned China of the US plan to wage a war of imperialism.[16] This was also an indicator that China feared an actual invasion by the US.

The second external security fear of China's was an invasion of mainland China by the US. This fear slowly grew beginning in 1961. China provided material and moral support to the DRV. In the summer of 1962, Ho Chi Minh and Nguyen Chi Thanh, a general officer in the People's Army of Vietnam, emphasized the possibility of US escalation into North Vietnam. While concerned, the Chinese were still not convinced of an actual US invasion of China. The assessment however, did alarm Beijing enough that it offered to equip 230 additional Vietnamese battalions.[17]

Tensions continued to rise in Beijing in 1964 as US presence in South Vietnam increased. In April 1964, Deputy Chief of Staff Yang submitted a report to Mao in response to his inquiry of "…how our country's economic construction should prepare itself for a surprise attack by the enemy."[18] The report pointed out several emerging problems, to include an overly concentrated industry. The inquiry by Mao indicated a suspicion of US invasion. However, Mao's response did not come for over three months, suggesting the current US presence had not tripped the threshold of an actual trigger.

The trigger arrived on 5 August 1964 in the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Mao responded to the initial April report just one week after the incident. While the first response took three months, Mao's quick response this time indicated a new sense of urgency. In Mao's response, he stated, "This report is excellent. We must…implement it."[19] He suggested establishing a committee to form recommendations. Within one

[14] Zhai, 217, 219.
[15] Cold War International History, 234.
[16] Cold War International History, 238.
[17] Jian, 359.
[18] This is a translated report by Qiang Zhai titled "Report by the War Department of the General Staff, 25 April 1964." "Cold War International History Project Bulletin: The Cold War in Asia," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995 / 1996), 243.
[19] This is a translated report titled "Mao Zedong's Comments on the War Department's April 25 Report, 12 August 1964." "Cold War International History Project Bulletin: The Cold War in Asia," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995 / 1996), 243.

week of Mao's request, the committee reported to the Chairman and Central Committee with a plan. The major action instituted because of the Gulf of Tonkin incident was the massive Third Front project. The program sought to increase China's strategic defense by decreasing the vulnerability of China's industry and major population centers. The plan accomplished this aim by dividing the country into three fronts. The First Front included large industrialized cities, especially those 15 cities with over a million people in population. The concept called for moving any new industry into the Third Front.[20] The Third Front called for a large self-sustaining industry in remote provinces that would serve as a strategic reserve. It essentially moved much of China's industrial capacity to the interior. Another aspect of the plan called for a "small Third Front." This project called for each province to develop its own light armament capacity. The Third Front Project was a significant endeavor. China's commitment of resources and effort after the Gulf of Tonkin incident is an important indicator of how fear triggered China to respond to an acute concern of a US invasion into China.

The final flash point for China came in March 1965 when the US began Operation Rolling Thunder. This sustained bombing offensive over North Vietnam along with the introduction of US Marine battalions in South Vietnam caused Beijing to adopt a new strategy. China began to send large numbers of troops to North Vietnam.[21] It is instructive to see just how quickly China's strategy changed. In January 1965, the Central Military Commission adopted a "Six-Point Directive on the Struggle against US ships and Aircraft in South China Sea…." The directive instructed the military to refrain from attacking US airplanes in Chinese airspace. The purpose was to prevent an escalation of hostilities in hopes of avoiding an invasion. However, in April, after the start of Rolling Thunder, Mao rescinded the order.[22] China's strategy shifted to a more aggressive posture due to an increased fear of invasion. Zhou Enlai's conversation with Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan, on 2 April 1965 reveals evidence of China's attempt to avert a US invasion. He states "China will not take the initiative to provoke a war

[20] This is a translated report titled "A Report on How Our Country's Economic Construction Should Prepare Itself Against an Enemy Surprise Attack, by Li Fuchun, Bo Yibo, and Luo Ruiqing, 19 August 1964." "Cold War International History Project Bulletin: The Cold War in Asia," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995 / 1996), 244.
[21] Zhang, 743-4.
[22] Cold War International History, 238.

(with the United States)….If the American madmen carry out an extensive bombing, China will not sit still and wait to be killed."[23] On 28 April, Mao met with members of the Central Military Commission and aired his fear of a US paratroop assault inside China. He stated "to disrupt our rear areas, and to coordinate with a frontal assault. The number of paratroops may not be many….In all interior regions, we should build caves in mountains…."[24] Again in May 1965 Zhou Enlai spoke with the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Albania and expressed China's plan to mobilize its population for war. Zhou mentioned that while he did not believe the US wanted to expand war into China intentionally, the pattern of war had a way of rising up unintentionally out of miscalculations.[25] Indeed, China feared an external threat due to US involvement in Vietnam. However, the question remains as to what extent *honor* and *interests* played in China's decision to intervene in Vietnam.

Before discussing the specific role of honor and interests in Vietnam, it is important to revisit the discussion from Chapter 1 over the subtle difference between the two. Honor stems from the Confucian moralistic obligation to spread revolution, whereas interests seek to increase the CCP's power. The former is selfless, the latter selfish. To some degree, China intervened in Vietnam to improve China's image in the world.[26] By helping fellow comrades, China would bolster its reputation as a leader of a worldwide communist revolution. Mao's reading of Marxism-Leninism shaped his vision of China as a world leader. Mao saw this as an opportunity to reestablish China as a central power by defeating imperialism. He saw fear (security), honor (moral obligation), and interests (China's world position) as closely linked.[27] All three played a role in China's decision to intervene in Vietnam. However, fear was the primary trigger that sparked a response by China.

Honor, or more specifically the moral obligation to promote revolutionary movements, has been a perceived view for Chinese intervention in Vietnam. China's

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[23] This is a translated conversation titled "Zhou Enlai's Conversation with Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan, 2 April 1965." "Cold War International History Project Bulletin: The Cold War in Asia," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995 / 1996), 244-5.
[24] Cold War International History, 238.
[25] Cold War International History, 238.
[26] Zhai, 4.
[27] Zhai, 221.

initial (pre-1964) sense of obligation to support Hanoi's drive to liberate South Vietnam stemmed from a perception that the DRV's war was a vital part of its world proletarian revolutionary movement. However, Mao qualified this desire by stating the purpose of revolutionary struggles. He said that the revolutionary movement was crucial to the defense of socialist states against imperialist aggressors.[28] Other evidence that China viewed support of Vietnam in terms of honor is found in Mao's meeting with Van Tien Dung, a Vietnamese General. Mao reassured Dung by emphasizing that they shared the same struggle and that China would provide "unconditional support."[29] In the early 1960s, China was aware of a potential security crisis by US involvement in Vietnam, however at that time the threat was below the trigger threshold. Primarily, Mao was concerned with promoting his "continuous revolution," that would pave the way for other oppressed people to gain victory through struggles.[30] Liu Shaoqi, Chairman of the PRC, illustrates further evidence of Beijing's resolve. He reassured Chinese support to the Vietnamese in their struggle against the US by pledging support through "an unshakable duty of the Chinese people and the Communist Party."[31] In the end, however, even China's motive to spread continuous revolution rested upon protecting itself from an external threat. Fear of imperialist encroachment and invasion of mainland China ultimately drove Beijing. However, China hid this motive of fear behind one of honor. Beijing portrayed a moral obligation to help its communist comrades as its reason for involvement in Vietnam. It was fear cloaked in honor that drove a Chinese response in Vietnam.

China's Response in Vietnam

China's response in Vietnam was a mixture of accommodationist and coercive strategies that never quite reached the right end (hard power) of the response spectrum. Although China sent troops into North Vietnam, it did not directly engage US troops with the exception of the Chinese Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) personnel whose role was primarily defensive. However, had US ground forces crossed the 17th Parallel into North Vietnam, China's fear of the US as an external threat would likely have led to a hard

[28] Zhang, 735.
[29] Jian, 360.
[30] Jian, 363.
[31] Zhang, 747.

power response at the extreme right end of the spectrum. Because China did not want to escalate the war, it chose to limit its responses to accommodationist and coercive responses as long as the US remained south of the 17th Parallel.

Accommodation, as that term is used in this study, and specifically diplomatic warnings, began in earnest after Rolling Thunder commenced in March 1965.[32] This was due to China not reaching a threshold of fear large enough to trigger a response until mid 1964 after the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. The first diplomatic warnings came in March 1965. China sent an indirect message to Washington by printing in its official paper that China was to offer "the heroic Vietnamese people any necessary material support, including the supply of weapons and all kinds of military materials," and it was ready "to send its personnel to fight together with the Vietnamese people to annihilate the American aggressors." Zhou Enlai continued the rhetoric that China was willing to escalate the war if need be by making the same announcement at a rally in Tirana, the capital of Albania, four days later. [33]

The second set of warnings went out in April 1965, but this time Zhou was more direct. In a meeting on 2 April with Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan, Zhou laid out a four-point warning for the US. The message stated that China would not provoke a war with the US, but it would support Vietnam. It went on to warn that if the US brought war to China that China was prepared to fight, even if the US used nuclear weapons.[34] This message was not lost on the Johnson administration. The recent memory of US involvement in Korea from the Truman administration's failure to heed Beijing's warning of crossing the 38th Parallel caused the administration to carefully consider how it carried out the Rolling Thunder campaign.[35]

The purpose behind Beijing's diplomatic warnings becomes clear from a conversation between Chen Yi, the Chinese Foreign Minister, and Nguyen Duy Trinh from Vietnam. In the conversation, Yi referenced China's history in negotiations: "We fight the enemy and when we reach certain stages, we start negotiating. The purpose is to

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[32] As a reminder accommodationist is used in this model to imply a propensity to avoid the use of force.
[33] Jian, 366-7.
[34] Jian, 367.
[35] Cold War International History, 239.
[35] Qiang Zhai, *China & the Vietnam Wars, 1950 -1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 236.

unmask the enemy."[36] In China's case, it follows that once it found itself in the Vietnam crisis, it sought to unmask US intentions in regards to war with China. Meanwhile, in addition to diplomatic warnings, the Chinese also began coercive responses in 1964.

China used deterrence and compellence to signal the US of its resolve in Vietnam. As tensions continued to build in 1964, China began deterrent measures by ordering three special division-sized units to organize with the intent of assisting the DRV.[37] After the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in August 1964, China stepped up its deterrent efforts. Beijing approved air force and navy units to move to areas along the Vietnamese border and ordered the construction of new airfields and radar stations. Additionally, China deployed 36 MiG fighters into North Vietnam. China supplied, trained, and equipped the fighters, but DRV pilots flew them.[38] Deterrent measures increased in April 1965 when China tracked two Navy aircraft over Hainan Island. The next day, 9 April, China sent MiG-17 fighters to intercept the US aircraft, but ordered the pilots not to shoot first. Liu Shaoqi laid out China's plan for deterrence during a speech to the Central Military Commission on 19 May 1965. He stated, "If we make excellent preparations, the enemy may even dare not to invade. If it does not invade, we will not fight."[39] China wanted to send a clear signal to the US about its intentions. This was deterrent behavior because China sought to maintain the status quo of keeping the US out of China using a threat of force. Beijing communicated its efforts to avoid conflict by requiring its troops to wear regular People's Liberation Army (PLA) uniforms. Well-marked troop build-ups along with new base complexes in northwest Vietnam provided a clear deterrent message to the US.[40]

In addition to deterrent measures, China also used compellence to respond to US intervention in Vietnam. This began on 14 November 1964 when China shot down a US

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[36] Translated conversation between Chen Yi nad Nguyen Duy Trinh in Beijing on 17 December 1965. "Cold War International History Project:77 Conversations Between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977," ed. Odd Arne Westad, Chen Jian, Stein Tonnesson, Nguyen Vu Tung and James G. Hershberg, *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Working paper no. 22, (May 1998), 91.
[37] Zhang, 747.
[38] Zhang, 740-2.
[39] Translated speech titled "Liu Shaoqi's Speech to the Central Military Commission war planning meeting on 19 May 1965." "Cold War International History Project Bulletin: The Cold War in Asia," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995 / 1996), 245.
[40] "Cold War International History Project Bulletin: The Cold War in Asia," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995 / 1996), 237.

unmanned reconnaissance drone.[41] After the initial cat and mouse games between US Navy fighters flying over Hainan Island in 1964, the Central Military Commission changed its "don't shoot first" policy. Mao ordered air force and navy units to shoot down any US aircraft that invade Chinese airspace.[42] China again stepped up its responses in August 1965 when it ordered two AAA divisions to North Vietnam. In fact, by 1969 China had 16 divisions and 150,000 troops serving in air defense. Overall, Chinese AAA troops shot down approximately 1,700 US planes and damaged 1,600.[43] Between 1965 and 1969, China sent 320,000 troops to serve in North Vietnam.[44] The Chinese forces however, were not infantry fighting units, but support and defense troops. Most of the troops sent to North Vietnam were either engineering troops in charge of building and maintaining lines of communications, or AAA troops supporting the defense of North Vietnam.[45] This was largely due to China's reluctance to escalate the war with the US.

Although the Chinese feared the external threat from the US in Vietnam, the restraint shown by Washington to stay out of North Vietnam with ground forces was enough to keep the Chinese below the extreme end of a hard power response. However, the Chinese did leave some indication of how it anticipated using force in the event that the US came north of the 17th Parallel. Evidence hints that China might use the first two of the three attributes of force presented in the strategic culture model: active-defense and *Shi*.

China's third principle in formulating its strategy during the spring of 1965 reveals a proclivity toward an active defense strategy. The principle called for China to meet US forces in North Vietnam in the event of a violation of the 17th Parallel.[46] Additionally, when the US increased bombings closer to the Chinese border in the spring of 1966, China became very aggressive in defending its border. These both serve as indications of China's tendencies to meet an aggressor on or outside its own borders with

[41] Zhang, 742.
[42] Zhang, 744.
[43] These numbers are contentious and nearly impossible to resolve. However, Zhang's research provides a educated figures. Zhang, 757-9.
[44] Zhang, 759.
[45] Jian, 371.
[46] Zhang, 761 and Jian, 366.

an offensive posture as ascribed in the active defense strategy. Beijing also showed that it still held to its belief in *shi* (seizing the initiative).

China offered advice to the DRV on strategy throughout the Indochina Wars, even dating back to the First Indochina War. Beijing suggested North Vietnam adopt a strategy of "not exposing our own forces for a long period, accumulating our own strength, establishing connections with the masses, and waiting for the coming of proper opportunities."[47] Although Beijing was not referring to a Chinese strategy in Vietnam but a Vietnamese strategy, it does serve as evidence that China still believed in the value of *shi*. In the end, US ground forces did not trip the 17th Parallel and, therefore, China did not commit infantry and armor fighting units in North Vietnam.

Conclusion

This chapter found that the Chinese intervened primarily out of *fear* wrapped in a cloak of *honor*. Fear of US invasion onto mainland China ultimately drove the Chinese to intervene, but the Chinese depicted the intervention as an effort to support its communist comrades. The Chinese reaction fluctuated on the response scale, ultimately falling short of a hard power response because the US did not march north of the 17th Parallel. The events that led up to the crisis began in 1961 with the introduction of additional US troops into Vietnam and evolved into a full crisis by 1964 with the Gulf of Tonkin incident. The conclusion counters a popular view that China's motive to intervene in Vietnam was based upon honor and suggests instead that China responded out of fear cloaked in honor.

[47] Jian, 358.

Chapter 4

Case Study Three: Taiwan, 1995

This chapter applies the strategic culture framework to the Taiwan crisis of 1995-1996. The Taiwan case adds breadth to the analysis. For instance, it provides a sample of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) actions without the direct influence of Chairman Mao. Additionally, because it occurred almost fifty years after the CCP came to power in China it allows an analysis of a matured government compared to the earlier cases.[1] Finally, the Taiwan case is an example of a crisis where the Soviet Union had no influence. The Taiwan dilemma was the most difficult crisis the CCP had encountered up to 1995 because it contained little of what Chinese strategists call "*tianshi*, *dili* and *renhe* [situational, geographical, and human and social advantages]."[2]

It is helpful to pause for a historical overview of Chinese tensions over Taiwan. Problems began as early as the 1950s. In 1954 and 1955, the United States signed the Mutual Defense Treaty and Formosa Resolution respectively to protect Taiwan, Quemoy, Matsu, and other islands controlled by the Nationalists. As the leader of the Nationalists, Chiang Kai-shek garnered support from the US to launch raids on mainland China resulting in crises in 1954, 1958, and 1962.[3] In 1981, Beijing adopted the "one country, two systems" formula that allowed Taiwan to unify with the mainland but remain autonomous under its current economic and social systems. Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, did not welcome the policy. While several events contributed to Chinese frustrations, the final straw occurred on 22 May 1995 when Washington approved a visa for Taiwan's president, Lee Teng-hui, to attend his college reunion at Cornell University.[4] The result was a series of missile tests, war games, and live fire exercises that occurred August 1995 – March 1996.

This chapter asserts that China used coercive diplomacy over Taiwan during the 1995-1996 conflict due to fear of Taiwan declaring independence from China. In other

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[1] The CCP had been in existence for almost 80 years, but only in power for 50 years.
[2] Sheng Lijun, *China's Dilemma: The Taiwan Issue* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd: 2001), 4.
[3] Gary Klintworth, "China, Taiwan and the United States," *Pacifica Review* 13, no. 1 (February 2001): 42.
[4] Robert S. Ross, "The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation: Coercion, Credibility, and the Use of Force," *International Security*, 25, no. 2 (Autumn 2000): 87, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2626754.

words, China feared losing a perceived part of its territory. China's response did not reach the extreme right, hard power end of the response spectrum, although China did implement a powerful coercive response. China had three aims during the Taiwan crisis: (1) coerce Taiwan leaders to forego their independence efforts, (2) coerce the Taiwanese people to vote against the party favoring independence, and (3) coerce the US to take a stand against Taiwan independence.[5]

The first section introduces the events that led up to the crisis over Taiwan. Next, the chapter analyzes the triggers that invoked China to turn to coercive diplomacy. The final section discusses China's response. This chapter demonstrates how China quickly moved up the response spectrum to a coercive strategy, but stopped short before reaching the hard power end of the spectrum.

Crisis over Taiwan

Tensions festered eventually reaching a crisis level that was fraught mostly with *danger* but also included a small amount of *opportunity* for Beijing. US involvement in Taiwan dates back to April 1950. CCP forces captured Hainan Island in April and then shifted its focus to the invasion of Taiwan. However, the Chinese aborted the invasion due to the Korean War, leaving the plan unfulfilled.[6] In April 1979, the US Congress increased Chinese apprehension by passing the Taiwan Relations Act that formerly obligated America to defend Taiwan. The act reassured the Taiwanese while deterring the mainland Chinese.[7] The next inflammation came in 1992 when the US violated its 1982 communiqué that promised reduced arms sales to Taiwan. The violation came in a deal to sell 150 F-16s to Taiwan. Then in 1994, Washington raised the 1981 protocol rules regarding US treatment of Taiwanese diplomats by affording them greater status.[8]

Taiwan also played its own part in aggravating China. In July 1994, the Taiwan Mainland Affairs Council issued a statement on cross-strait relations known as the "White Paper." China found several aspects of the paper troubling. For one, the paper spoke of sovereign independence, stating that Taiwan "has always been an independent

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[5] Ross, 110.
[6] Andrew Scobell, "Show of Force: Chinese Soldiers, Statesmen, and the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis," *Political Science Quarterly*, 115, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 230, http://www.jstor.org/stable2657901.
[7] Klintworth, 42.
[8] Ross, 87.

sovereign state." The White Paper also rejected the "one country, two systems" doctrine because it subordinated Taiwan to the mainland. Naturally, Beijing rejected the White Paper.[9] The Taiwan crisis continued to brew in the mid 1990s as the Taiwanese people boasted of their economic and cultural accomplishments. Furthermore, the leaders of Taiwan were pushing for membership in the United Nations (UN), a further sign of independence tendencies. Another marker came as Taiwan attempted to build worldwide, high-level relationships. The Taiwan world tour began in the Asian region in January 1994 when Premier Lian Chan met with officials from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand followed a month later by President Lee visiting the same countries.[10] These events added up over time, growing into a full crisis in May 1995 when the US approved a visa for President Lee to visit the US. Beijing saw the US decision as a serious challenge to China's opposition to Taiwan independence. A Chinese foreign minister stated that this was an effort by President Lee to create "one China and one Taiwan."[11] By June 1995, outrage by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) led them to confront China's Taiwan Affairs Leading Small Group (TALSG) and demand harsher action over Taiwan's independence tendencies.[12] Further indication of China's perception that Lee's visit was seen as a crisis came in July when Foreign Minister Qian informed former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger that "what is imperative is that the US make concrete moves to eliminate the disastrous effects of its permitting Lee's visit."[13] Clearly, by the summer of 1995, China perceived Taiwan as a dangerous crisis.

However, amongst the danger, China saw *opportunity*. Beijing's overall national strategy was to continue domestic modernization while gaining international recognition as a responsible government. By balancing the Taiwan dilemma against its overall domestic strategy, China skillfully managed Sino-US relations. Cultivating the US relationship was an important enough aspect of China's national modernization scheme that it led them to avoid conflict during the crisis.[14] The real opportunity for Beijing was that the net effect of its efforts led to an international perception of a responsible,

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[9] John W. Garver, *Face Off: China, United States, and Taiwan's Democratization* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997), 29.
[10] Garver, 30-1.
[11] Ross, 91.
[12] The TALSG held strong influence over decisions concerning Taiwan. Scobell, 231.
[13] Ross, 91.
[14] Lijun, 1, 68.

disciplined government. While the crisis provided some opportunity to China, the perceived danger over the Taiwan crisis festered to the point that it triggered an action by China.

The Trigger that Provoked Action

The trigger that drove China to respond to the Taiwan crisis was *fear* of losing Taiwan as a state under mainland China.[15] This fear over territorial integrity differed slightly from the Vietnam and Korea cases because it did not involve the fear of invasion by the US onto mainland China. Another difference from the Vietnam and Korea cases is that *honor* and *interests* are not necessarily noteworthy in the case of Taiwan. No doubt, the PLA considered an independent Taiwan an issue of honor, worthy of defending, just as a US Soldier views the preservation of Hawaii as a part of national honor. However, honor as used in this study, refers to the Chinese concept (Confucian moralism) defined in the framework of Chapter 1. Nonetheless, China's fear over the potential for Taiwan to declare independence was real. The fear stemmed from actions taken by the US and Taiwan.

The US played its own role in instigating fear in the Chinese by reversing its trend of reassuring China through communiqués over Taiwan. The US issued three communiqués beginning in 1972. The first stated that the US would withdraw forces from Taiwan. The second, in 1979 stated, "The United States continues to have an interest in the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue." Finally, the 1982 communiqué stated that the US "understands and appreciates" China's "policy of striving for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question."[16] In light of 1995 events, Chinese leadership sought a fourth communiqué to provide reassurance from the US over Taiwan. The US State Department was not willing to oblige. Before a visit to the US by Vice Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing the State Department issued a statement that it would not agree to a fourth communiqué because "…our position on Taiwan is clear," and it "is not going to change."[17] The United States passed up an opportunity to alleviate Chinese fear in December 1995. Instead, the US sent an ambiguous signal to China by sailing the USS

[15] See Chapter 1 for definitions of fear, honor, and interests.
[16] Garver, 76.
[17] Ross, 98.

Nimitz aircraft carrier through the Taiwan Strait unannounced. This was the first transit since 1979 when Sino-US relations were normalized. Because an official statement from the US was withheld, it was not clear if the carrier was meant to send a silent warning to the Chinese or if it was simply making a detour to avoid weather delays, a notion offered by some in the US.[18]

What did crystallize for China was the perception of US support for Taiwan's independence. The evidence of US support came in the form of two visa approvals in January 1996. On 6 January, Washington approved a visa for Taiwan's Vice President, Li Yuan-zu. China immediately aired its objection to the visa. The White House further stoked the flames of fear in China by approving another visa for Lee on 31 January. Indeed, Washington ignored China's warnings.[19] These all came on the back of the main signal that the US was beginning to tacitly acknowledge Taiwanese independence by allowing President Lee to visit in the summer of 1995. Not only did China experience fear over US actions, but also over Taiwanese actions.

President Lee's visit to the US fostered further trepidation for Chinese leadership. While Lee spoke at his reunion at Cornell University, he boasted of Taiwan's accomplishments, confirming China's perception of his proclivity toward independence. This fear met potential reality as Taiwan held its December elections. China saw the elections as a potential sign of legitimacy to the international community. Part of the fear surrounded the popularity of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which plainly stood for independence.[20] Further blatant disregard for cross-strait relations occurred in early 1996 when Taiwan held military maneuvers that China saw as a show of force and resolve to be independent.[21]

While the CCP found the December election threatening, the first democratic presidential election scheduled for March 1996 appeared even more so. If Lee won the December election, China knew it would have to contend with an obvious pro-independence president. Relations would be tense at best, as evidenced by Lee's campaign declaration that he possessed the "capability, wisdom, and guts to handle cross-

[18] Ross, 104.
[19] Ross, 105.
[20] Ross, 102.
[21] Ross107.

strait relations." However, another candidate also instilled apprehension. The DPP candidate was Peng Ming-min, another pro-independent voice for Taiwan. Peng stated during the campaign that he would work with the mainland only if it "recognizes Taiwan as a sovereign and independent state." To drive the point home Peng went on to say that Taiwan would inflict a "heavy price" on the mainland if the PLA chose aggression.[22] By 1996 the US and Taiwan provided China ample reason to fear a potential independent Taiwan. The US approval of President Lee's visa tripped the threshold for response by the Chinese in May 1995.

Some perceive Taiwan as an issue of honor for the Chinese. This is an issue of definitional clarity. As a reminder, the framework translates Chinese cultural preferences into a US interpretation. The difference between the Chinese versus US view of honor explains why honor was not the motive in Taiwan. The Chinese are not morally bound to keep Taiwan as part of China; instead, it is a territorial integrity issue. Hence, as defined in the framework, territorial integrity falls under the category of fear unlike a moral obligation, which falls under honor.

China's Response over Taiwan

Lee's visa to the US raised the Taiwan dilemma to crisis level, which moved it to the forefront of the CCP's concerns as it sought an appropriate response. The CCP searched for a response that would signal both the US and Taiwan its view of an independent Taiwan. The reaction fell short of an extreme hard-power response because the US did not cross Taiwan's line in the sand, defined as a declaration of independence by Taiwan.[23] The CCP reply contained both *accommodationist* and *coercive* responses.

The CCP immediately began an accommodationist (diplomacy and diplomatic warning) strategy following the announcement of the US visa approval for President Lee.[24] The CCP struck back by canceling high level government trips from Beijing to Washington and recalling the visiting Chinese air force chief of staff from an official trip in the United States. Additionally, it recalled its ambassador for "consultations" and

[22] Ross, 105.
[23] Ross, 95.
[24] As a reminder, accommodationist is used in this model to imply a propensity to avoid the use of force.

suspended scheduled arms proliferation and human rights talks with the US.[25] The US offered no concessions during this time, causing Beijing to try a different approach to induce the US to back down. The carrot was an offer to suspend its assistance to Iran regarding nuclear energy. Additionally, Foreign Prime Minister Qian Qichen told the press that Beijing was ready to work with Washington for greater cooperation in regards to Taiwan.[26] Meanwhile, Under-secretary of State Peter Tarnoff met with Prime Minister Li Peng to broker an unofficial summit between Chinese and US leadership on 24 October 1995 in New York. Beijing, temporarily hopeful, returned its ambassador to Washington.[27] Upon a US request and to the chagrin of China, the summit did not spend time on the Taiwan crisis, but instead focused on reopening talks on trade and bilateral issues.[28] Beijing's attempt to induce the US toward a neutral stance over Taiwan's independence seemingly failed. China chose to bide its time until it could build up negotiating power. China aired its disappointment over the summit when Qian said, "we do not think that this is enough because a complete agreement…has not been reached."[29] Hence, China stepped up its rhetoric in 1996.

The first verbal volley, directed at the US, came in January 1996 from Li when he stated that the option to use force was "directed…against the schemes of foreign forces…to bring about 'Taiwan independence.'"[30] The second volley, directed at Taiwan, came in March when the chairman of the Taiwan Affairs Leading Small Group, Jiang Zemin, stated that if Taiwan maintained its propensity toward independence "the struggle between China and Taiwan will not stop."[31]

China also incorporated coercive behavior while handling the Taiwan crisis. China sought to deter Taiwan from seeking independence while simultaneously compelling the US to change its recent signals that suggested support of an independent Taiwan. The summer 1995 exercises primarily focused on compelling the US, while the March 1996 war games focused on deterring Taiwan during the upcoming elections.[32]

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[25] Ross, 94.
[26] Ross, 99.
[27] Ross, 99.
[28] Ross, 99.
[29] Ross, 100.
[30] Ross, 106.
[31] Ross, 106.
[32] Scobell, 232.

China used a show of force in the form of military exercises and missile tests during the Taiwan impasse. Efforts to compel the US began in the summer of 1995 with a threat of force.

Chinese leaders used a show of force to signal to the United States that the Taiwan predicament was a "question of war and peace" and the US "could be dragged into military conflict" over Taiwan.[33] The show of force occurred 21-23 July 1995, 90 miles off the coast of northern Taiwan. The demonstration consisted of six DF-15 missile tests in conjunction with a naval exercise. The next round came in August as the PLA conducted missile tests, live-fire artillery exercises, and naval and aircraft exercises off the coast of Fujian, near Taiwan.[34] A foreign ministry spokesperson made the imperative of China's compellence strategy clear by stating, "What we are going to do is make the US realize the importance of US-China relations to prompt it to take the right track."[35] These signals aimed at the US in response to Lee's visa, but they also served a secondary role of deterring Taiwan.

The primary deterrence signals aimed at Taiwan began in November 1995. China used a show force to deter Taiwan from its independence tendencies. China's reaction came in response to a September Taiwan missile test as well as a joint exercise that simulated defending Taiwan against invasion. China's response was a ten-day effort that simulated an invasion of Dongshan Island in what may have been the largest joint operation in PLA history. The exercise consisted of 160,000 troops and 300 ships. To ensure an unambiguous message, Beijing touted the exercise as a "most serious warning" to Taiwan leaders who sought to "break Taiwan away from China through so-called 'democratic procedures.'"[36] The exercise seemed to achieve the effect that Beijing sought: to influence elections in a manner unfavorable to the pro-independence candidates. Lee Teng-hui's Nationalist Party was expected to achieve an easy victory, but instead only held the majority by two seats.

The next major round of deterrent actions came on the heels of the first Taiwan democratic presidential elections in March 1996. Beginning on 7 March, the PLA fired

[33] Ross, 94.
[34] Scobell, 232.
[35] Ross, 94.
[36] Whiting, 121.

three M-9 missiles near Taiwan.[37] Then from 8-15 March, the PLA launched an exercise consisting of 150,000 troops, 300 airplanes, and ships from all three of China's fleets. This time the targets were even closer to Taiwan. In fact, they were only 32 miles from the southwest coast of one of Taiwan's major seaports, Kaohsiung, and 22 miles from the major port of Keelung.[38] The announcement started a spiral of tit-for-tat responses. The US replied by deploying the USS *Independence* carrier battle group on 8 March. On 9 March, Beijing announced a second joint exercise from 12-20 March. Not to be outdone, on 11 March the US sent a second carrier battle group, centered on the USS *Nimitz* to join the *Independence*. Seemingly unscathed, the PLA began the exercise on time, 12 March. Again, on 13 March the PLA launched another M-9 missile. Finally, on 15 March Beijing announced a third set of exercises for 18-25 March that would end two days after Taiwan's presidential election.[39] China used impressive shows of force to deter Taiwan from its independence tendencies. Indeed, China used accommodationist and coercive tendencies to deal with the Taiwan crisis, but an intriguing question remains: would China have used force to respond to the crisis?

Staunch restraint and flexible diplomacy appear to provide evidence that Chinese leadership preferred to avoid war.[40] However, had Taiwan declared independence, Beijing was likely willing to use force to maintain what its leadership, including the PLA, perceived as a legitimate part of China.[41] Although China did not use combat force in Taiwan, it did exhibit characteristics that increase understanding of the strategic cultural tendencies of China. One example is the use of *shi* (seizing the initiative). The Chinese seized the initiative by acting preemptively once the US approved a visa for Lee. Even after the US tried to ignore the crisis, Beijing never lost focus and continued an aggressive coercive strategy that kept the US reacting throughout the crisis.[42] Answering whether China would have used force against Taiwan is counterfactual. However, the PLA did show a proclivity to use force during the crisis. So much so that a February 2000 white paper declared, that China reserved the right to use force if Taiwan declared

[37] Ross, 108.
[38] Whiting, 122.
[39] Whiting, 122.
[40] Scobell, 233, 238.
[41] Scobell, 244.
[42] Whiting, 120,123.

independence.[43] In the end, China did show restraint from an extreme hard-power response. Yet, China's coercive strategy was bold, leaving little to the imagination in terms of Chinese resolve in regards to its "one country, two systems" blueprint.

Conclusion

The complexities of the 1995 Taiwan crisis brings breadth to the analysis in answering how China reacts to an external national security crisis. The chapter asserted that China used coercive diplomacy to deal with Taiwan during the 1995-1996 conflict out of fear of a "one China, one Taiwan" versus "one country, two systems." Although China did not respond with force (hard power), Beijing did send a clear signal using a coercive strategy that Taiwan's behavior was unacceptable and that the US should carefully consider its support of an independent Taiwan. The first section shed light upon the actions by the US as well as Taiwan that began in the 1950s and then came to be perceived as a crisis by mainland China. The next section analyzed the triggers that provoked China to turn to coercive diplomacy. The evidence suggested that fear was the primary driving factor behind China's response that began in the summer of 1995 with Lee's visa. The final section discussed China's response. The response fell short of a hard power response only because Taiwan did not cross China's advertised line in the sand defined as a declaration of independence by Taiwan. The reply contained both *accommodationist* and *coercive* responses. China's response aimed to deter Taiwan from declaring independence and to compel the US to reverse its recent trend toward reassuring Taiwan of its support. China relied upon impressive shows of force made up of missile tests, live-fire exercises, and war games to signal Taiwan and the United States. Whether China would have invaded Taiwan is speculation. However, Beijing made it clear that it was not pleased with Taiwan's direction toward independence.

[43] Scobell, 236.

Conclusions and Application

For those panda huggers or dragon slayers, the hope is that this paper offered an acceptable alternative viewpoint. The two options presented in the beginning were misunderstood dragon and underestimated panda. While these to do not capture all alternatives, they do provide a fresh view of China's strategic culture. Strategic culture was the lens through which the paper viewed Chinese reactions. Strategic culture answers whether, why, and how states fight. Specifically, it is how decision makers view the role of war in state affairs, and how efficacious they perceive the use of force in resolving national security crises.

This paper asserted that US strategists could better understand, and to some extent anticipate, how China reacts to an external national security crisis by translating Chinese propensities into a US paradigm using a framework grounded in the theory of strategic culture. The paper introduced a strategic culture framework to test the thesis. The author chose three case studies with the intent of assessing the utility of the model. The three objectives offered were to: (1) explore the utility of the theory of strategic culture, (2) translate key Chinese paradigms to US paradigms, and (3) provide a practical framework to help the US strategist better understand and anticipate how China might react to an external national security crisis. This chapter presents the material in four sections. The first section reviews the strategic culture framework found in Chapter 1. The second section presents a summary and findings of the three case studies in chapters 2 - 4. The third section provides some practical applications for the US strategist. Finally, the chapter concludes with a section that addresses the shortcomings of the framework.

Crisis-Trigger-Response Framework

Chapter 1 began with an overview of strategic culture theory. The author concluded that strategic culture theory is incapable of precisely forecasting state behavior, but that it does contain potential for anticipating state behavior based upon trends. The framework introduced was a three-part model that began with a Chinese crisis. There is a valuable lesson for US strategists concerning China's view of a crisis. The western view generally funnels the strategist to solve a crisis by fixing the problem. This leads to attempts to return to the status quo. The Chinese recognize the danger

inherent in a crisis, but instead of seeking a return to status quo, the Chinese strategist seeks to capitalize on the crisis by looking for opportunity to make things better than before the crisis. US strategists should adopt this approach to crisis response.

The second part of the model was the *trigger*. This is simply the motive that provokes action. It implies a certain threshold that when reached will cause the leadership in China to respond. Fear, honor, and interests served as the western translation for Chinese concepts.

The final part of the model was the Chinese *response*. This portion of the framework represented China's tendency to use force. The hope is that the framework will serve as an instrument to answer how China reacts to an external national security crisis. In order to test the model, the paper examined three historical case studies.

Historical Case Studies

Relevancy drove the choice of case studies and they proved additionally beneficial because of the breadth and depth they brought to the analysis. The case studies served an additional purpose of providing qualitative evidence to test the framework's validity as a practical tool for the US strategist. This section begins with a review of each of the three historical case studies.

Chapter 2 covered the first study, the Chinese crisis presented by the Korean War. The chapter focused on the years 1949-1950, the buildup of the crisis. The Korean case study was the most comprehensive case for evaluating the framework because it encompassed all aspects of the model. After applying the evidence, the framework suggested that a perceived threat to territorial integrity drove the Chinese decision to intervene, triggered primarily by fear that evolved into a hard power response by China. The response was significant; more than three million Chinese participated in the war with over one million casualties.[1] The intriguing question is why China was willing to commit vast resources to Korea.

A traditional thought is that the Chinese refused to accept the violation of the 38th Parallel and the thrust toward the Yalu River by ground forces in October 1950.[2]

[1] Xiaobing Li, Allan R. Millett, and Bin Yu ed. and trans., *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 5-6.
[2] See page 19 for evidence.

However, new evidence suggests that the Chinese made the decision to intervene as early as August 1950, even before the Inchon landing. Why did China intercede? It was out of a *fear* of a US invasion of mainland China. Beijing viewed Korea as a stepping-stone for the US into Manchuria.

Beijing's response began with an accommodationist strategy that sought to quiet the crisis through diplomacy.[3] Once efforts failed in the United Nations, China turned to coercion. It sent strong verbal messages backed by shows of force along the border of China and Korea. The Chinese maintained a coercive strategy until US troops crossed the 38th Parallel. Once that occurred, China quickly moved to the hard power end of the response spectrum.

The Chinese use of force in Korea aligned perfectly with the force response characteristics described in the model: active-defense, *shi*, and deception. Peng, the leading Chinese general in Korea described the active-defense concept as one that allowed an offensive posture with a defensive backdrop. The Chinese demonstrated the active-defense concept as it engaged the US on Korean soil as opposed to defending on Chinese soil. Additionally, the Chinese sought to seize the initiative (*shi*) through a psychological-political shock in October 1950. The Chinese used the opportunity to capitalize on US denial of Chinese involvement in Korea by attacking south of the Yalu River. Finally, deception played a part in the early maneuvers. Peng wrote, "We employed the tactic of purposely showing ourselves to be weak, increasing the arrogance of the enemy, letting him run amuck, and luring him deep into our areas."[4] These three attributes support the framework of how China responds when using force. Indeed, the Korean case study showed promise for the utility of the strategic culture framework.

Chapter 3 discussed the Vietnam crisis for China, covering the period from 1961-1969. The Vietnam case brought depth to the analysis because of its similarity with the Korean crisis. It presented a comparable dilemma with similar Chinese leadership making the decisions. The case demonstrated continuity, an indicator of the validity of strategic culture, in Beijing's decision-making. The case showed that *fear* wrapped in a cloak of *honor* drove the Chinese to intervene. The fear of US invasion into China

[3] As a reminder accommodationist is used in this model to imply a propensity to avoid the use of force.
[4] Mark Burles and Abram N. Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force: Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2000), 5.

ultimately led Beijing to intervene by committing resources and support troops to North Vietnam. However, leadership presented it as an issue of honor (moral obligation) to support their communist comrades. The fact that China did not escalate to a hard power response (commitment of offensive troops) makes sense because the US did not move troops north of China's line in the sand, the 17th Parallel.

Similar to Korea, China perceived the US as a threat once it became clear that Washington intended to move troops into Vietnam. The crisis began to percolate in 1961 but did not reach a full crisis until the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964. At that time, Beijing felt an external pressure by the US, as it perceived a circular entrapment by the imperialist Americans. Likewise, it saw US intervention into Vietnam as a precursor to a US invasion of the mainland. China reacted very similarly to that of its response in Korea.

China responded initially with an accommodationist approach as it sought to avoid an escalation of the crisis. The main difference between the two cases is that Beijing never reached the hard power end of the response spectrum. This is likely due to US lessons learned in Korea. While the US ignored warnings of Chinese intervention in Korea if troops moved north of the 38th Parallel, the US heeded warnings in Vietnam. The Chinese sent a clear message that it would not tolerate US troops north of the 17th Parallel. Admittedly, it is not possible to predict China's response had the US marched north of the 17th Parallel; nevertheless, it is reasonable to opine that it would have responded with force.

Regardless, even without an assumption of a forceful response, the framework did prove useful in analyzing China's response. Although the second case brought depth to the study, to prove useful, the framework required a case that brought breadth of analysis. The final case found in Chapter 4 fulfills this requirement.

The final study looks at the Taiwan crisis that occurred from 1995-1996. The Taiwan case study serves the analysis well by providing a look at a crisis where the CCP had been in power for almost fifty years, Mao was no longer influential in decision-making, and the Soviet Union was dissolved. The evidence from the case suggests that China used coercion over Taiwan out of *fear* of losing part of its territory.

The dilemma over Taiwan began to brew as early as the 1950s, reaching crisis level on several occasions leading up to 1995. The crisis in 1995 fully erupted when the US approved a visa for the Taiwanese president. This event invoked fear, which triggered the Chinese response.

Similar to the Vietnam case, the Chinese response over Taiwan never crossed into the hard power response end of the spectrum. However, Beijing certainly explored the envelope between accommodationist and coercive strategies. The Chinese sought to deter the Taiwanese from seeking independence while it tried to compel the United States to change its recent actions that hinted at support of an independent Taiwan. China utilized several impressive shows of force that included missile tests, live-fire exercises, and military maneuvers near Taiwan. China again established a clear line just as it had done in Korea and Vietnam. This time, instead of a line in the sand represented by a latitudinal measure, it was the declaration of independence by Taiwan that China declared would drive it to use force. Much like Vietnam, it is speculation whether China would have used force in Taiwan. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to assume that Beijing was willing to use force if Taiwan declared independence.

Practical Application

With the evidence in, it is time to pass judgment on the practicality of the model by evaluating its ability to fulfill the three objectives set forth earlier in the chapter. The three objectives were to: (1) explore the utility of the theory of strategic culture, (2) translate key Chinese paradigms to US paradigms, and (3) provide a practical framework to help the US strategist better understand and anticipate how China might react to an external national security crisis. If the first objective is not achieved, the following two objectives are moot as the validity of the first objective is a necessary condition for the other two. Fortunately, the framework showed promise toward hitting the first target.

The first objective was to assess the utility of strategic culture theory. Because the theory is relatively new, scholars still debate its value and more specifically, its ability to predict behavior. The framework assumed that strategic culture theory could explain past and approximate future state behavior in a crisis. Determining predictive behavior is beyond the scope of this paper, though the author does not ascribe that degree of

confidence to the theory. However, the model did show some promise as to the utility of strategic culture theory.

This was evident in the consistency across the spectrum of the model in explaining events that occurred during each of the three crises presented. Had China's reactions not followed a pattern, the theory would have broken down. However, as the case studies showed, China followed a very similar path in how it viewed and protected its national interests. Table 1 shows a comparative analysis using the three cases along

Table 1: Comparative Analysis

CRISIS:		Korean War	Vietnam War	Taiwan Crisis
TRIGGER:	Fear	✓	✓	✓
	Honor			
	Interests			
RESPONSE:	*ACCOMMODATIONIST*			
	Diplomacy /Diplomatic warning	✓	✓	✓
	COERCIVE	✓	✓	✓
	Deterrence	✓	✓	✓
	Compellence			
	USE OF FORCE	✓		
	Active-Defense	✓		
	Shi - Seize the initiative	✓		
	Deception			

Source: Author's Original Work

with each component of the model. The checkmarks indicate that the characteristic was dominant in the crisis. Specifically, it is instructive to note that in all three cases China responded out of fear over territorial integrity. Although it seems obvious that a country would react when faced with fear, these findings show a pattern that suggests an underlying Chinese motive of fear in each crisis response. The strategic culture lens

brings this into focus. While Korea revealed what is commonly believed to be a motive of fear, Vietnam and Taiwan revealed a fresh view of China's real motives. Indeed, China responded primarily out of fear in these cases, not out of honor as traditionally assumed. This presents a valuable new approach to Chinese flash points in a crisis. The findings from the model begin to demystify the Confucian code of honor as a primary driver for Chinese actions. Another telling finding captured in Table 1 is that China responded in all cases using both accommodationist and coercive approaches. Even more specific is the pattern that China followed.

In all instances, China sent a clear message to the United States in regards to the line in the sand and what the consequences would be if the US crossed that line. It began each crisis with an accommodationist approach that sought to quiet the crisis before it escalated. This goes against the held myth that China sends ambiguous signals during a crisis.[5] For example, during the Korean War, the traditional belief is that China took an indirect, ambiguous approach with its diplomatic messages to the US. This legend likely came about because at the time of crisis the CCP was a new government without a US embassy, and therefore, no direct line to Washington. Nonetheless, Beijing leadership went out of its way to send a clear message, one that the US chose to ignore.

Chinese attempts to contain the crisis did not stop at diplomacy but instead gradually escalated to a coercive approach. Escalation was proportional to the threat's perceived proximity to China's line in the sand. In Korea and Vietnam, the line was on a map; in Taiwan, it was a political act: a declaration of independence. Regardless, in all cases China used graduated responses. The responses began on the soft power end of the spectrum and moved along the response spectrum in a proportional degree to the perceived proximity to its line in the sand. Although China only reached the extreme right, hard power end of the spectrum in the Korea case, it is instructive to find that this follows what the framework suggests. In other words, the framework identifies a line in all three cases that if passed, would invoke a hard power response. However, because only the Korean crisis violated the line, that case was the only example of a hard power reaction.

[5] See page 34 evidence and citations.

It is worth noting this conclusion's limits. In fact, the framework does not prove that China will act in a predictable manner in regards to the use of force. It does however, follow that it is reasonable to anticipate China's use of force based upon a clear warning. In sum, the evidence suggests that strategic culture theory is a useful tool for explaining state behavior and that it holds potential to anticipate approximate future Chinese behavior during a crisis. The second objective was to design a means to translate Chinese paradigms into US understanding.

The requirement for translation implies a need to interpret an unfamiliar language. In this case, the framework seeks to take what many see as a mysterious and complex culture and provide a US equivalent. It is important to understand that much like a translation from one language to another, the framework translations are not perfect. Instead, the framework attempts to take Chinese cultural concepts and convert them into a western understanding that, if applied, would allow for an approximate cause-effect understanding. In short, it provides a means to perform "educated" mirror-imaging. Each of the three main parts of the framework performs this translation.

The crisis portion of the model demonstrates the difference between the US view of a crisis and the Chinese view of a crisis. The Chinese combine danger and opportunity. This is an important point to grasp for strategists grappling with issues related to China because it leads to a completely different frame of mind. Likewise, the trigger part of the framework provides a useful tool for translation.

The trigger is the motive that invokes a response by China. Westerners understand the paradigm of fear, honor, and interests. By narrowly defining each of these terms, the model allows the strategists to apply their own understanding to the concepts. This part of the framework is the most difficult to translate. Understanding cultural preferences, like Confucian moralism or the Chinese measure of CNP, is difficult for a westerner. Nevertheless, juxtaposing the Chinese conception against the US concepts allows for another avenue of understanding that can help with planning and decision-making. The final part of the model translated is the Chinese response.

Translating this portion of the framework was challenging but beneficial. The response portion of the framework uses the modern western-version of soft and hard power along a continuum depicted in the form of a response spectrum. The three levels

of response depicted are accommodationist, coercive, and the use of force. Narrow definitions scope the terms. The graduated spectrum serves an additional purpose of interpreting China's resolve. The result is a framework that is simple to apply, yet multifaceted enough to encase important complexities in Chinese strategic culture. This leads to the final objective of the paper, which was to provide a practical framework for the US strategist by presenting a means to understand and anticipate how China reacts to a national security crisis.

The framework appears to be practical for strategists. It takes a complex problem and simplifies it into an easily understandable model. By applying the framework to past crises, it provides an alternate method for explaining Chinese actions. In addition, by applying the framework to a future crisis, it may help the strategist anticipate likely Chinese responses. The framework, nonetheless, is not a one-stop model for Chinese understanding, but a method to supplement understanding. When analyzing China, balance the framework against political, military and organizational cultures. Likewise, other international relations theories can broaden understanding of Chinese decision-making. Finally, context matters. While the framework proved useful in this study to build Chinese patterns of strategic cultural tendencies, current strategic context is always important to consider. The framework simply provides overall trends that might be extrapolated to future expectations for Chinese responses.

The task for the strategist is to distill events related to China in order to determine if they meet crisis criteria, what triggers are involved, and how China might respond based upon the triggers. The model provides the strategist a tool to perform educated assessments.

Is there a better label than panda hugger or dragon slayer to describe Chinese strategic culture? These labels are of little use because they are extreme and they prejudice analysis. The paper presented two alternatives, misunderstood dragon and underestimated panda. The author adopts "misunderstood dragon." Misunderstood because of the cultural schism between Chinese and US culture that leads to misperception as to China's real motives, e.g. Chinese motives in Taiwan.

The framework helps mitigate misperception by providing a cultural translation for the US strategist. The term dragon is appropriate because China has a propensity to

use force that is again misunderstood. Statements found in Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, like "For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill," are misleading because they imply a tendency to avoid fighting.[6] This is not the case. China did demonstrate a desire to avoid conflict but only if Chinese conditions were satisfied. If not, Beijing was willing to use force to resolve the conflict.

The dragon presents an appropriate analogy if it is not taken too far. The image of a dragon placed to protect its territory fits the Chinese strategic culture. The dragon rouses only when a threat gets close to its territory. If a threat approaches, the dragon uses shows of force like breathing fire to scare off the threat and demonstrate its resolve. This represents China's early attempts to use coercion to mitigate the crisis in all three cases and signal its intentions to the US. Finally, a dragon leaps into action if the threat pierces its territory. The result is a full attack using all force available to defend against the perceived threat. Perception is important. The threat need not be real for the dragon to react. This was evident when the US went north of the 38th Parallel in Korea, never intending to threaten the Chinese mainland. While the US believed its intentions were obvious, China misperceived them. Indeed, China is a misunderstood dragon. Knowledge of misperceptions about China in US planning and decision-making is valuable. The Appendix contains a hypothetical scenario that illustrates how a US strategist might apply the *crisis-trigger-response* framework to future planning and decision-making.

Shortcomings

The strategic culture framework is not the panacea for Chinese cultural understanding. The model contains several weaknesses. An obvious weakness is that it does not account for explanations outside of the framework.

As an example, the model attempts to forecast a decision from Chinese leadership using only strategic culture. The model does not take into account the myriad of other factors that influence individuals. Additionally, the model offers only rough guidance for determining the primary motive (fear, honor, interests). Along these same lines, the

[6] Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 115.

model does not illuminate events that China might consider a crisis. In short, the strategist must determine the entry parameters for the model. The benefit, however, is that the model points to the necessary entry parameters that help jump-start strategic thinking. Understanding that shortfalls exist allows the strategist to mitigate them by using eclectic methods of analysis to fill in the holes.

Another weakness of the model is that it takes a 50-year slice of history and attempts to draw cultural patterns from a country that is thousands of years old. This is somewhat mitigated because of the currency of the cases. The assumption is that strategic culture does not change considerably over a short time. Instead, it assumes that changes take place very slowly, and are measured in units larger than decades. Furthermore, the model assumes that strategic culture is real and identifiable.

The final shortcoming presented here is that three data points (three case studies) by no means proves the framework's validity. The findings were, however, encouraging and do at least suggest a reasonable expectation as to the framework's utility.

The US strategist will benefit by keeping the *crisis-trigger-response* framework in mind when considering a crisis that involves China. In so doing, the strategist will have a framework for utilizing China's past, to anticipate its future responses to national security crises.

Appendix

Practical Scenario

Following is a hypothetical scenario that illustrates how a US strategist might apply the *crisis-trigger-response* framework to future planning and decision-making. The scenario begins with North Korea announcing that it will conduct several long-range missile tests that will transit near the coast of Japan. Meanwhile, the international community has gained evidence that suggests a quickly maturing nuclear weapons capability in North Korea. Japan sees these events as a direct threat to its security and demands South Korea and the international community (namely the US) take action to prevent the tests, or Japan will take matters into its own hands. Pacific Air Force Command (PACAF) tasks its A5 strategy shop to provide analysis of the situation. Specifically, PACAF is concerned with how Beijing will perceive a US response.

The crisis-trigger-response framework is a useful tool for analyzing the situation. The first part of the framework helps the strategist understand how China might perceive the events and whether Beijing will consider it a crisis. The strategist can look for events that pose a danger to China as well as those that might present an opportunity to China. Perceived danger might include things such as an increased US presence in the Asian region or the threat of Japanese forces in South Korea. A major opportunity exists for China to increase its Comprehensive National Power (CNP) by taking a lead role in taming North Korea's instigation through diplomacy, economic sanctions or even a threat of force. Armed with this knowledge, the strategist can make recommendations that seek to minimize efforts that increase danger to China while maximizing efforts that offer opportunity to China.

The trigger in the second part of the framework is equally useful. Here the strategist can define the underlying motives that might cause China to react. Certainly, any crisis that takes place near China's borders will have the potential to spark fear into Chinese leadership. This dilemma might be particularly worrisome to the CCP because it involves the US and Japan, two countries that China would not like to see conducting

operations near its border. It is useful to consider some of the potential implications of this scenario. One bright and shiny lure might be the aspiration to calm Japan's fears. A quick option might be to increase F-22 and bomber presence in the Asian area in order to defend against missiles and to provide striking power against North Korea if needed. This increased comfort for Japan could easily turn into a major discomfort for China, potentially exasperating an already complex problem. The natural inclination might be to focus efforts on comforting Japan, but the framework also unveils the need to reassure China.

The final part of the framework will help the strategist interpret and anticipate Chinese responses based upon US actions. The strategist should sift each course of action (COA) with the framework to anticipate how China might respond. If the response is below the level of tolerance acceptable to US decision makers, then the strategist can further investigate that COA. Even in execution, however, the strategist can continue to use the model by matching the actual Chinese response to the anticipated response. For example, if the strategist anticipated a soft power response, but China responded with a coercive strategy, then using the model to reassess the triggers is helpful. A reassessment might point to a misperception of the level of China's resolve in the crisis, or potentially even a misidentified crisis definition.

In addition, the strategist can get a feel for the temperature in Beijing based upon the messages it sends when it enters the accommodationist stage (first stage along the response spectrum). If Chinese strategic culture holds true, then Beijing will send a clear message that contains a line in the sand for China's use of force. The strategist can use this data to determine how far an airpower reply can go without reaching a hard power response by China. A final lesson along this line is that the US should only call China's "bluff" if it is willing to accept a hard power response. The framework does not confirm that China is not bluffing when threatening the use of force, but it certainly suggests that.

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